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© ED DOLE

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AUSSIE ACE TOBY PRICE CAN DO THINGS WITH A DAKAR BIKE THAT JUST SHOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE
© SEBAS ROMERO

ED SPEAKS

At the risk of sounding like a right old gaffer I'm gonna chuck a statement right out there whether you like it or not – ooh, doesn't time fly by!

It only seems like yesterday that I upped sticks and headed north up the M6 as a sexy 27-year-old to take on the role of Production Editor at this fine magazine. And here I am 14 years later still plugging away and doing perilously long hours to get the job done.

14 years is a chuffing long time and in my case equates to 169 copies of DBR, 10 test bikes, eight knee ops (including a total replacement of the right leg-hinge a few years back), five issues of Trialsworld, one Fuelled, a king-sized stack of event programmes, four works vans, two drowned trials bikes, one FIM Journalist of the Year award, two editorial budget overspends and more concussions than somebody who's had as many concussions as I have is capable of remembering. I also took on the role as TMX Editor two and a half years back so you can add around 135 copies of that bad boy to the tally n'all!

By my reckoning this 14 year stretch makes me DBR's longest ever serving staff member – with only the Lawless reign of terror coming close to my lengthy effort. There is one man who's got us both beat though and although he's never even visited DBR Towers has had his stuff slapped inside the magazine ever since our January/February 1982 issue. Ladies and gentleman, I present to you Mr Jack Burnicle...

While a lot of people simply know Jack as the man behind the mic at the Dirt Bike Show not many figure that the historian chap whose monthly mutterings appear in 'the Dirt Bike Rider' used to actually be a full-on moto photojournalist who travelled from GP to GP. And it's in that role that he touched a generation, a generation who relied on TMX and DBR to fill them in on what was happening in a pre-internet and live TV coverage off-road world.

It wasn't just the news that Jack delivered that touched us but the way in which he delivered it. In my mind the guy's a genius and he instilled a love for the English language in me at a time

when mainstream literary legends epically failed. Of course, it definitely helped that Jack waxed lyrical about a sport I already loved and for creating that passion I have to look to another hero of mine – my dad!

Now, my dad's not a hero in the same way that Dave Thorpe is or Tommy Searle's growing to be but I'm always going to look up to him and be grateful for everything he's done for me even though I know I've not always shown it. I guess I have my dad to thank for my earliest memories too – being at races, cleaning his Maico with a blunt screwdriver, scratching his goggle lenses with a crusty rag and just generally enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of a day at the races surrounded by my family.

And those sweet memories really help remind me how important family really are – in every day life and particularly when it comes to off-road sports. While we all like to claim that motocross, trials and enduro aren't team activities the truth is that without our original team behind us – that original team being our family – we most likely wouldn't have ever been able to start riding in the first place. I certainly know that I wouldn't and I can't think of a single champion who's got where they are without the support of theirs either.

So with Christmas coming up be extra nice to your team and remember that a subscription to DBR – or TMX for that matter – makes an excellent gift!

Until next year...

Ps – If you're wondering why there's a random picture of British Sidecarcross champions Stuart Brown and Josh Chamberlain on this page the truth is it ain't so random. Stuart's dad Norman was the man who got my dad into motocross in the first place and Stuart was the subject matter of my first ever DBR feature. So there...



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2016 BRITISH MX2 CHAMPION ADAM STERRY AT PRESTON DOCKS MX

When we heard that Factory Kawasaki's latest superstar signing – that's Sealand's very own Adam Sterry – was going to be training at a track less than 30 miles away on his new bike and wearing his new kit we just knew it was time to load up the DBR van with camera gear and bag ourselves some snaps of the freshly crowned British MX2 champion. And while the rest of the RMJ Academy members worked on increasing their qualifying speed we dragged Adam away from the training session to shoot our very first cover image of 2017! Here are some of Ed Dole's shots that didn't make the cut...





PEACHY SNAPS!

***A FINELY FERMENTED SELECTION OF
NUNO LARANJEIRA'S SWEETEST SHOTS FROM 2016...***

Images by Nuno Laranjeira



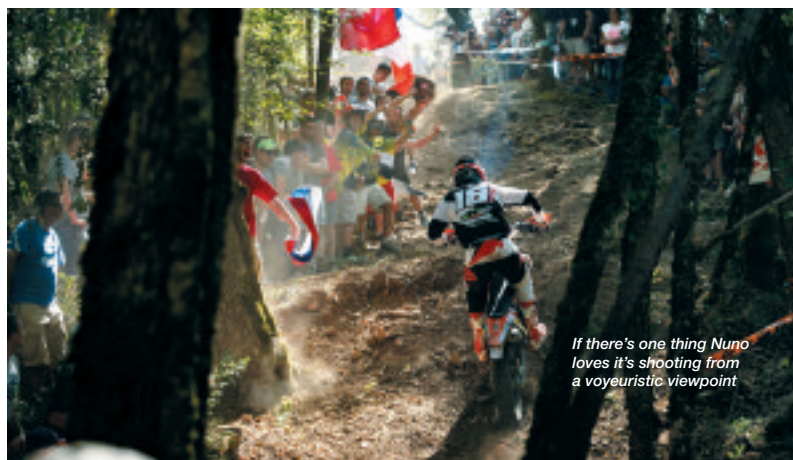
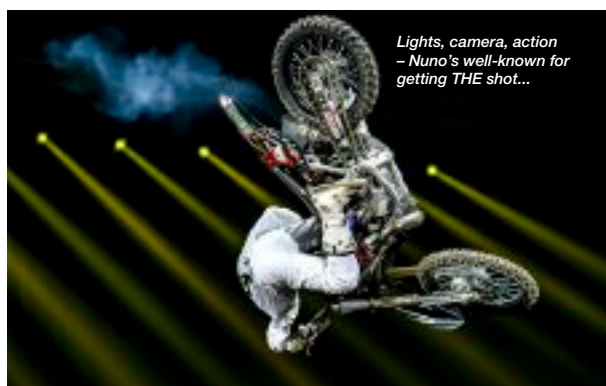
*The fans celebrate Team France's victory
at the Maggiora Motocross of Nations*



The Dutch sidescarcross GP offered a rare opportunity to shoot something a little bit different to the norm...



As a sporting spectacle Nuno's a huge fan of the British Speedway GP which fills Cardiff's Millennium Stadium each summer





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NUNO'S SWEET SHOTS!



*Mel Pocock powers through
a figure of eight training session*

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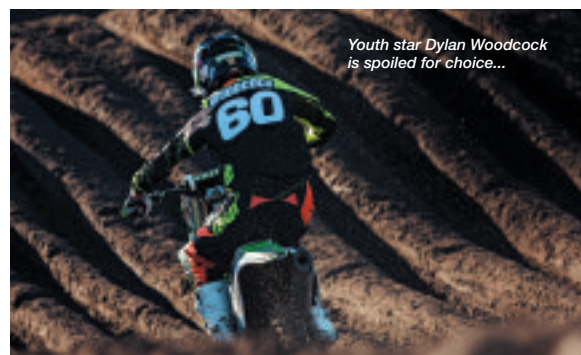
Jeffrey Herlings is never shy about showing how he's really feeling



DBR test pilot Ryan Houghton explodes out of an APEX berm...



Ben Adriaenssen and Ben van den Bogaart work hard in the deep Dutch sand



Youth star Dylan Woodcock is spoiled for choice...



The Vintage ISDE proved a hit



Graeme Irwin breaks free from a Lyng berm





With fans getting so close to the action the EnduroGP series is almost like looking back in time at world championship MX



It's almost impossible to get a bad shot of Tony Cairoli



The bumps are the traditional way to celebrate a win in speedway



Long Track sees competitors racing on dirt at speeds approaching 100 miles per hour



Steve Dixon's new signing Darian Sanayei yanks an EMX250 holeshot!



A 1986 Husky at the 2016 Vintage ISDE



EnduroGP ace Matt Phillips is an absolute beast on a bike

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OUR MONTHLY ROUND-UP OF ALL THAT'S GREAT, NOT SO GREAT AND DOWNRIGHT DISAPPOINTING IN THE OFF-ROAD UNIVERSE . . .

Is the season to be jolly...braaapp! Crazy ain't it but all that's left of 2016 is the Christmas turkey dinner, empty boxes of Cadbury's Roses and Quality Streets and a couple of well-earned pints.

The annual acknowledgement of the best British championship round via the Maxxis 'Organiser of the Year' award this year went to the Woodbridge & DMCC which hosted round six at its Blaxhall round in Suffolk. The Blaxhall track has only been back on the British championship calendar for the past two seasons after a very lengthy lay-off.

Buildbase Honda's Graeme Irwin is now the Pirelli British Masters official ambassador for the 2017 season. Irwin won the Pro MX1 title in '16 so is essentially the man right at the top of the motocross tree in the British Masters community and therefore the obvious choice to fill the role.

What that role will entail exactly I'm not sure but Series Director Colin Hambridge insists that they have plans to utilise Mr Irwin's popularity, professionalism and personality to benefit the series for all its competitors in 2017.

The Dyer & Butler team has switched to Kawasaki for 2017. With a stable comprising former Maxxis MX2 British champion Steven Lenoir, Liam Knight and MX2 rookie Taylor

Hammal, the boys will be switching to green bikes after some time on orange.

Frenchman Lenoir is set to ride the KX450F which will mark the first time he will compete on a Kawasaki in his career and he's hopeful of a fast transition to the Jap brand after completing his rookie MX1 season this year on Euro machinery.

With Dixon Kawasaki the official Kawasaki UK race team, Dyer & Butler is certainly next in line to carry the torch for the green meanies with a strong line-up of three riders each able to race inside the top-10 all season.

Italian team JK Yamaha continues its strong links with UK shores and has again put two young British riders behind the gate through the full MXGP series in 2017. James Dunn and DBR test pilot (plus part-time eyebrow model and Guy Fawkes impersonator) Ryan Houghton will replace Alfie Smith and Alex Snow to compete in MX2 and MXGP and continue with British firm iFly as title sponsor. I can't remember if I mentioned this before but did you know that the iFly JK Racing Yamaha team also receives sponsorship from male porn star Rocco Siffredi? He even has a logo on the bike. Sweet!

This year's International Dirt Bike Show was reported as being, as Comic Book Guy would say, "the best one ever!" Well, maybe not ever but tens of thousands of throttle junkies took to

Stoneleigh Park, recording an improvement in attendance of four per cent over previous years.

The Michelin MX Nationals championship continues to go from strength to strength as the series builds a following. For the second year in a row every class in the championship is completely full and registration closed by the middle of November! The dream is not over for you yet if you have been too slow with your entry, though. Series owner Paul Irwin has opened up a wildcard entry form so with two weeks to go before an event if it looks like they may have spaces open up they could potentially get in touch.

And what about this wee heart-warmer? Jamie Law is a veteran of motocross but was absent for most of the 2016 season courtesy of a lack of opportunity at the track mixed with a rare opportunity away from it.

The Cumbrian bought his local village bakery at an auction last year and decided to try his hand at property developing. This year Jamie focussed his attention on the old bakery and turned it into a couple of two-bedroom houses but his bike skills haven't been forgotten as he is now a member of the Apico Husqvarna MX1 team for 2017. It just goes to show young aspiring motocross riders that you can develop skills outside of motocross while still maintaining a status within it.

Graham Irwin will be handing out Ferrero Rocher for the Pirelli British Masters crew in 2017...



Team Dyer & Butler go green for '17



Long is the tradition of British motocross enthusiasts heading to Spain during the winter months to prepare for the upcoming season and the infamous Redsand MX park – which is something to do with Stefan Everts – is a popular venue choice.

This year, however, Redsand MX has seen an opportunity to capitalise on the congregation of riders at its pad and decided to throw on an international race in the middle of January which has attracted a very impressive line-up. Riders like Paulin, Tixier, Nagl, Seewer, Tonus and more along with a healthy British contingent of Simmo, Sterry, Anstie, Watson, Nicholls and Mewse are all pencilled-in to race a little over a month before the start of the MXGP season in Qatar.

Jake Moss, a former Australian national champion, has been handed a four-year ban for testing positive for Ostarine – a drug to help recovery from injury, improve the ability to add and maintain muscle and improve endurance. During his ban he isn't allowed to compete, coach or even help run an event. He's already announced his retirement. No wonder.

The retirement craze is booming just now. Taddy Blazusiak has been living the dream racing for the KTM factory and

enjoying long-time Red Bull 'athlete' status since he burst onto the SuperEnduro scene in 2007. But the 33-year-old Pole admitted that he's been pondering retirement for quite some time now and announced he's going to hang up his racing hat after the first round of the 2016/2017 FIM SuperEnduro World Championship in Poland this December.

Other retirees this month are former US and British motocross champion Mike Brown who at the tender age of 44 has decided to step away from competitive endurocross and 2013 East Coast SX champ Wil Hahn who cites injuries as the main reason behind his decision.

One man back from retirement for a cameo appearance was Ryan Villopoto at the Aus-X Open in Sydney. RV hasn't raced since he broke his arse at the GP of Trentino last year but fancied a trip to Australia. Chad Reed won in front of Justin Brayton and Jay Marmont on night one and ahead of Cooper Webb and Brayton on night two. RV finished sixth and fourth but admitted his tongue was in the spokes by half race distance. He did mention that he would like to be invited back next year, though.

If you were super-amped about the >>



TADDY RETIRES

BLAZUSIAK HANGS UP HIS BOOTS

KTM's Taddy Blazusiak has called time on his full-time professional racing career. The greatest endurocross rider of our time announced that the opening round of the SuperEnduro World Championship in Poland will be his last race.

Delivering the news off the back of a frustrating AMA EnduroCross campaign, the six-time world champ, five-time AMA champion and five-time Erzberg winner feels the time is now right to call it quits.

"I have been thinking about this decision for a while now," says Blazusiak. "I have always told myself that I will make that call when I feel the time is right."

A decision that's not come lightly, Blazusiak has given it his all for a very long time...

"I've been racing around the world for a long time. I trained the best and hardest I could and I raced for every race win and championship I entered like there is no tomorrow. I achieved more than I ever thought I could and I'm grateful for all the great memories from all my years of racing."



COLTON WINS

ENDUROCROSS

DEBUT AMA TITLE FOR HAAKER

Husqvarna's Colton Haaker has won the 2016 AMA EnduroCross championship – his first AMA title.

Capping off what's been a great season for Haaker, the 2016 SuperEnduro world champion added the EnduroCross crown to his trophy cabinet. Entering the final round of the season with a decent points cushion over closest rival – and outgoing champ – Cody Webb, Haaker placed as runner-up to him on the night to get the job done.

Haaker now heads to Europe where he'll begin the defence of his SuperEnduro title at the season opener in Krakow, Poland.



JARVIS RAISES THE ROOF

GRAHAM CLAIMS FOURTH ROOF OF AFRICA WIN

Husqvarna's Graham Jarvis ended his outstanding 2016 hard enduro season with victory at the Roof of Africa.

With wins at the recent GetzenRodeo and Ukupacha in Ecuador, the Brit was on flying form in South Africa and looked determined to deliver the goods. Despite the extremely hot and dusty conditions, Jarvis put in a solid ride on day one to end it 10 minutes clear of KTM's Alfredo Gomez. The Spaniard attacked hard on day two's eight-hour ride to level the scores and start the third and final day just 20 seconds behind Jarvis.

With everything to play for the duo went at it bar-to-bar, leaving nothing on the table. At the end of that six-hour day Jarvis remained locked on Gomez' wheel tracks to claim the win by just nine seconds following a total of 17 hours of racing.

Making his debut ride at the Roof, Billy Bolt – still nursing a shoulder injury from Sea to Sky – was seventh.



STROKE OF GENIUS

TM RACING'S NEW 300 FOUR-STROKE

TM Racing has added a 300cc four-stroke enduro to its 2017 model range.

Double and reigning Enduro 1 world champion thanks to Eero Remes, TM's Italian-built machinery is some of the most competitive in the paddock. The mid-sized four-stroke is actually 292.3cc with a six-speed gear box and features both kick and electric starts. Contact TM UK for more details.

Displacement: 292.3cc

Starting: Kick or Electric

Gearbox: 6-speed

Fuel Capacity: 7.5L

Ignition: Microtec electronic Kokusan generator

Jeffrey Herlings passes a difficult log but manages to keep it together for the win at the Red Bull Knock Out event in Holland



MXGP championship heading back to San Marino for the first time in quite some time next season then don't be. There are often casualties on the venue calendar after the mk1 edition is initially released each season and this year doesn't break that trend. San Marino is off the schedule for '17 and has been pushed back into 2018 making room for Maggiora to come back onto the scene.

The Red Bull Knock Out is notoriously the toughest sand race in the world so it was no surprise that Jeffrey Herlings dominated the event in Holland, beating 1000 riders to take the W by two-and-a-half minutes. EWC rider Nathan Watson finished second – as he did last season – but this time it included a titanic battle with Glenn Coldenhoff. Two-time world champion Steve Ramon finished in fourth place and Axel van de Sande, who won the race last year, rounded out the top five.

What did I say about Marvin Musquin last month? He's a danger man for the SX

title next year as he continues to go on a rampage through the international pre-season supercross events. The lightweight Frenchman has added two crowns to his throne as the new King of Paris Lille and the King of Geneva along with the Red Bull Straight Rhythm one he acquired a couple of months ago and has yet to drop a race win. MM is out of his rookie season on the 450 now and looking fast and aggressive.

GL12, the European two-stroke outfit owned by Bob Buchanan and based in the West Country, is switching to KTM after a long alliance with Yamaha. Also changing is the rider roster as he switches out Ando for the current EMX300 champion Mike Kras. Lewis Gregory remains a firm fixture in the team as he has for many season now. Ando will now ride solely for Verde KTM, riding the EMX300 on his two-stroke and the Maxxis British championship aboard an SX-F450.

KTM has finally unveiled plans for EFI two-



Nathan Watson wins Skegness then wheelies his way to second overall in Holland

strokes – on enduro models only. It's believed that the Austrian giant has been working on this (open) secret for a couple of years and did some 'in the field' testing at a recent extreme event. The reason behind the development is not only for performance but to try and comply with new Euro emission regulations set to be enforced in 2020.

It feels a lifetime ago since 2016 got going with the German round of SuperEnduro on January 2 and now bikes have been parked for a bit of R&R. So in review of what's been, we've cobbled together a 2016 top-10 winners list of British enduro.

It's a little hard to pick an overall winner so we're calling it a tie between Steve Holcombe and Graham Jarvis. Both at very different ends of the age and discipline spectrum, both have equally enjoyed a cracker of a year.

Almost 20 years Jarvis' junior, Holcombe has become British enduro's first senior world champion since David Knight. Stepping up

to the mantle, the Beta rider went above and beyond what anybody expected of him this year. Not only winning the Enduro 3 world championship, he came within a whisker of securing the EnduroGP outright title. And as this year's British enduro champion too, the future is looking very bright for him. So much so, Beta has gone out of its way to sign him up until 2019 at least.

At 41 years of age Jarvis keeps getting stronger, not slower. 2016 was again one of his best with the Husqvarna rider basically winning all the Red Bull hard enduro races that really mattered. Erzberg, Romaniacs, Roof of Africa were the big ones plus wins at The Tough One, Battle of Vikings, GetzenRodeo and Ukupacha in Ecuador cement his status as the King of Hard Enduro for at least another year. He also ticked the 'one million followers on Facebook' box too.

A close third behind Holcombe and Jarvis is our 125cc world champ Jack Edmondson.

Ensuring the future's bright for the next generation of the Fast Eddy clan, young Eddy secured his debut world title with a round to spare back in July. It's likely he'll step up to the Junior ranks for 2017 where we're all hoping he can deliver the goods again.

We made some noise about it last month but it's certainly worth shouting about it again – Great Britain finished as runner-up in the ISDE. What a ride from the guys and effort from those behind the scenes to secure a result like that. It's been many, many years since Team GB got onto an ISDE World Trophy podium but in Spain Danny McCanney, Jamie McCanney, Jamie Lewis and Nathan Watson did exactly that. Add in Holcombe for 2017 and they might just go one better.

Fifth on our list has to be European enduro champion Brad Freeman. Lifting his first major international title, 19-year-old Freeman is certainly one of Britain's most talented enduro riders. Claiming the title Tom Sagar won in >>



Lee Sealey had a cracking ride at the ISDE



DBR tester Ryan Houghton will have Rocco Siffredi behind him as he takes on the GPs in 2017



Steve Holcombe was victorious in 2016

2015, Freeman overcame a year of challenging injuries to get the job done. Picked up by Boano Beta – the guys who’ve been instrumental in Danny McCanney and Holcombe’s careers – Freeman is off to the Junior EnduroGP class for 2017.

Freeman wasn’t our only winner in the Euros with Jane Daniels dominating the Women’s class too. Carding the perfect season, she did it in style too while almost winning the Women’s world title, only to fall short at the final round.

Seventh on our list is Nathan Watson. Awarded EnduroGP’s Outstanding Rookie award, the MXGP ex-pat joined KTM for 2016 with no previous enduro experience. He won

his first race at the opening round of the Italian nationals and went on to challenge Eero Remes for the Enduro 1 crown. Quality stuff.

A year of injury has Jonny Walker down in eighth. A broken leg cost him a genuine shot at winning the SuperEnduro title and ruled him out of Erzberg and Romaniacs but he made a winning return at Red Bull’s 111 Megawatt.

Spending spring rehabilitating from a serious knee injury, Danny McCanney improved in both speed and confidence as the season progressed to help Team GB onto the ISDE podium, finish third in the Enduro 1 world championship and runner-up to Holcombe in the British championship.

Completing the top 10 is a tough call but Lee Sealey gets the nod of approval. Flying in under the radar, Sealey carded some solid results in the Junior SuperEnduro category – almost winning a couple of races – before going on to finish third to Edmondson in the 125cc Youth Cup.

So there we go, what a stacked top 10 – and with guys like Sam Sunderland, Jamie McCanney, Josh Gotts, Paul Bolton, Tom Sagar, Billy Bolt and even David Knight just missing the cut it goes to show just how strong British enduro is right now. Hats off to 2016’s top 10 and roll on another epic 12 months of enduro action in 2017.





WIN!WIN!WIN! WIN!WIN!WIN! THE MOST AWESOME ARENACROSS FAN PACKAGE EVER...



The 2017 Arenacross Tour kicks off on January 7 in Manchester's Manchester Arena which means that even if you're a subscriber reading this on the very day it plopped through your letterbox that it's less than, erm, hang on let me take my socks off... 23 days away! Blimey, that came around really, really fast...

So, in just over three weeks time the awesomest indoor race series in Europe kicks off in the capital of the north but don't despair if you haven't got tickets just yet as we're offering each and every reader of Dirt Bike Rider the opportunity to win the ultimate Arenacross VIP package. It's so radtacular it'll blow your mind!

The prize includes two Platinum VIP tickets for a round of your choice – there are seven to choose from – and a swanky hotel room for the night. Heck, we'll even pick you and your chosen partner up from the hotel and take you straight to the arena in a limo. After that you'll get to enjoy the full Platinum VIP experience which basically includes –

- Exclusive VIP seats to watch the event from
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- Entry to the event and corporate areas
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- A fully serviced bar
- Hot and cold fork buffet
- Free programme and event lanyard
- Privileged entrance to the arena prior to doors opening
- Back stage pit walk
- Exclusive track walk
- Meet the Pro AX and FMX riders
- Signed Arenacross merchandise

All in all it's a prize worth well over £600 which is definitely well worth winning.

To enter this amazing competition we need you to answer an oh-so testing question and then fill in the form below and send it to us at AX Comp, DBR Towers, 41 Northgate, White Lund Industrial Estate, Morecambe, LA3 3PA before the closing date of January 4. First thing on the morning of the fifth we'll pop all the correct entries into a box and randomly pick ourselves a winner!



DIRTBIKE RIDER COMPETITION ARENACROSS FAN PACKAGE

Which current British Motocross Champion is competing in the full 2017 AX Tour?

- Is it: A) Tommy Searle
B) Tommy Hilfiger
C) Tommy Knocker
D) Tommy Lee Jones

Answer: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone number: _____

Preferred round: _____

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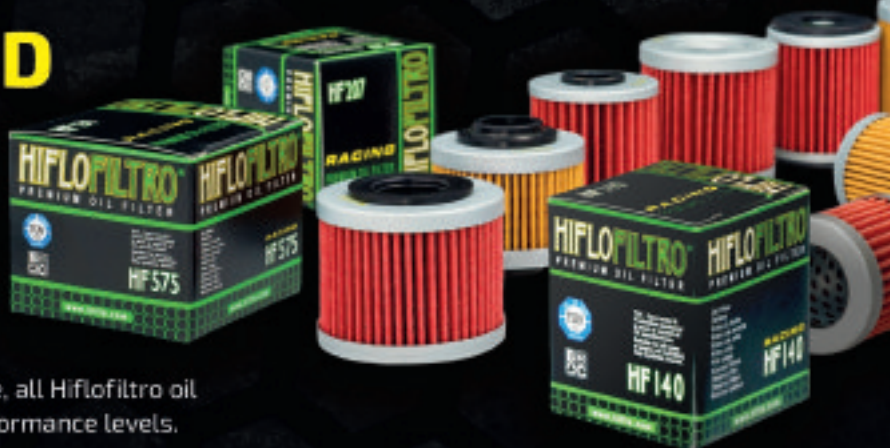
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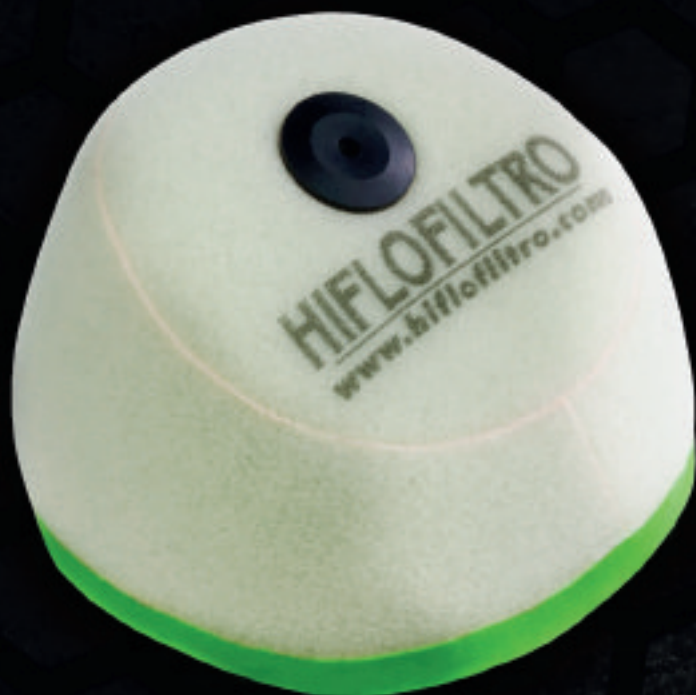


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TONY CAIROLI



TONY FINALLY PUTS A RING ON IT AND THEN TAKES PART IN THE MONZA RALLY SHOW...

Photos by Lorenzo Resta

Dear DBR readers, welcome back to my personal page! It's always a pleasure to be included in this magazine every month, allowing me to share some of the little moments of my life with you guys.

It's almost Christmas time and Jill is working hard in order to transform our house into a little Santa's village! She's very creative and loves to hand-make a lot of the decorations and gifts for our family and our friends, so every single present is unique and special and not just something bought off the internet!

We have lived together for many years and we share everything – the good times and the bad – not only in racing but also in our private life. So on our last trip to Abu Dhabi I plucked up the courage and took the big step – I've asked her to marry me! We were on the top of a skyscraper with a wonderful view and as I gave her the ring she said "yes"!

We will get married next year at the end of the EICMA season because before it's almost impossible and we will get to celebrate 10 years together in the best possible way!

After Abu Dhabi we went back home to go to the EICMA and last time I was writing to you I was boarding the flight to Milan. This time I'm coming back from Milan – it's become my second most visited place of the year!

EICMA was great as always, I don't know how many fans I met and how many autographs I signed but it was something really special. For

three days we were running around the show from one stand to the next, from KTM to Airoh, then to Sidi, Axo, Magneti Marelli and many more. Autograph sessions, pictures, interviews, some live events on the radio, a filmed interview and a meeting at KTM with the bosses and then we start all over again for another round of autographs, pictures and so on every day – it's tougher than a race weekend!

After EICMA we went home for a few days and I was back on the bike testing and training before attending a very nice charity event – "Il Rombo del cuore" – which is a football match hosted in Cattolica stadium near the Marco Simoncelli Misano Circuit in order to raise funds for the widow of Dorian Romboni, a road race rider who died three years ago during a charity event on a supermotard bike.

We had a dinner with a charity auction the previous evening and then the day after we played the match which was riders vs drivers. It was a who's who of motorsport stars including Marco Melandri (WSB), Niccolò Antonelli, Francesco Bagnaia (Moto3), Riccardo Patrese, Vitantonio Liuzzi (F1), Emanuele Pirro (24 hours of Le Mans), me and Rui Goncalves (MXGP) and many more professional cyclists and other athletes, all coming together in order to help someone who needs it. It was nice and moreover I love to play football so it was a good chance to play on a professional football field with so many friends.

After this event I went back to Milan for the Monza Rally Show, something that is becoming the traditional last race of the year for me. I've

been coming to Monza for three years to race and for this fourth edition my expectations were really high.

I had the chance to test a little bit two days before the beginning of the rally and I was using the same car as last year with which I was second until the last stage and with which I won the Master Show that closes the event on Sunday.

Unfortunately, even with this preparation not everything went as I planned. The Monza Rally Show is primarily an opportunity to have fun but when we are here no-one wants to lose. This year we were a bit unlucky and were unable to reach the podium at the rally. I was hoping to right this wrong in the Masters Show but a small mistake put us out of race.

Anyway there's always next year and I want to thank the team and Magneti Marelli Checkstar for all the help I received and especially my navigator Danilo Fappani who allowed me to give my very best. The level of competition is rising year after year and in 2017 I would love to do some more testing to be able to drive for the top spots with the best drivers!

Now it's time to get back on two wheels. My team-mate Glenn Coldenhoff is waiting for me at home and we have to work hard before the new season which starts more or less in one month with the Internazionali d'Italia.

I want to wish to all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Buon Natale amici inglesi!

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BRYAN MACKENZIE



HOW TO PLOUGH THROUGH CHRISTMAS BRY MAC STYLE...

Man, it's always the same. I love Christmas and I look forward to the atmosphere of it in a big way but I'm always so sh*tte at a fundamental aspect of it – shopping. I definitely over-think gifts, always wanting to be unique and quirky but end up dragging the experience right to the toes of Christmas Day before panic-buying something I looked past weeks before.

I'm no stranger to typing in the words 'awesome presents for her' or such like into Google for inspiration from someone who has already put in the groundwork which I can then pass off as my very own ingenuity. And I have a broad spectrum to shop for – the wife, the daughter, the sibling that's mad on motocross (easy) and another that is not. Then there's a dad who would rather be abroad, the mum and grandparents that think Kawasaki was a suicidal Japanese fighter pilot, a few nieces and nephews and some friends and neighbours.

This year, though, I've done some 'structured' over thinking and taken notes, analysed, weighed up and come through with my own gift guide to Christmas...

For her:

As a result of my in-depth research it seems the general consensus is that chicks don't appreciate the simple stuff like perfume, chocolates, flowers, make-up etc – so stay out of Boots. They love that sh*t, they just don't love it from you – it's not complicated enough. They want to know that for a while at least they were on your mind as you thought intensively about their gift.

They love to go away to places and Paris seems to come up often – pah, aim a little lower my good lady! Apparently it seems they appreciate guys going through the effort of making them something as well but a macaroni necklace just ain't gonna do it. So how about making your own gift box for all that Boots sh*t they love but don't want you to buy? By putting it into a homemade box makes it look more deliberate, as if it were bought for a bigger purpose other than just convenience...

Jewellery also comes across as a dodgy one according to my findings because our knowledge on ladies accessories is limited and you can guarantee they would conveniently be passing the jewellery store one day and just so happen to see the price of that present you bought them and then it's rice and beans for tea that night.

What about a book? Who'd of thunk it but chicks still like to read books and, at the end of the day, it's a good natural resource for keeping the fire going should you ever experience a lengthy power cut.

Bry's quick guide:

She's an important one so you want to get this right...

- A trip away – Paris, a spa day, night away (Travelodges don't count)
- Repackage all of those little easy gifts into one giant

box to create a 'super gift' and hope it goes through as a polished turd

- A book – one sh*t enough that once she's read it you could burn it to stay alive if there was ever a zombie apocalypse

The wee one:

My Heidi is only going to be just over three months old by the time old SC comes out swinging on the 25th so she doesn't get it at all and doesn't want for much right now either. So what do you get her?

I'm going to get her some insurance for my new mobile phone because I bet in the next year or so she's going to need it!

Bry's quick guide:

- Mobile phone insurance – because that thing is going to end up in her mouth, in flight, underwater or left on a cafe table somewhere

The motobro:

Easy – a hooker! Most of the terrain right now given the weather will be sand so how about a set of Pirelli Scorpion softs or some Dunnerplo MX11s (hooker/scoop tyres)?

Failing that a set of those 100% thermal riding gloves are worth their weight in gold right about now and I've just recently got into those ingenious Polisport foldable moto bike stands that flatpack completely to save room in the back of the van which can very often be a valuable commodity when loading up.

Bry's quick guide:

- Sand tyres for his dirt bike – they're practical and he'd appreciate them
- 100% Brisker winter riding glove to rebel against frostbite
- Polisport moto foldable stand to take the stress out of van packing

Dad:

He's a tough nut to crack. My dad just never wants to be here at Christmas and would rather use the holiday to be abroad instead so maybe just a fistful of foreign notes and a pair of Bermuda shorts?

Or what about a subscription to Amazon Prime, DBR or the TMX? They're gifts that keep on giving.

Bry's quick guide:

- Foreign dollars
- DBR sub
- TMX sub
- Amazon prime sub

Mum and grandparents:

These guys just love family. More than anything they love memories over material stuff and Baileys Irish Cream. High tea dates, spa days and family portraits showed up popular – cue the beautiful baby granddaughter.

Unique hand and feet casts framed, dated and personalised and – boom – you've nailed it. If you want to blow your mum's and grandparents' minds with this

you're probably a bit late for it this year but, if you start planning and laying the ground work now for next year, you could have 2017's Chrimbo wrapped up for these guys before the end of the year!

Bry's quick guide:

- Days out – lunch, spa days, a trip to somewhere nice (you should try to be there)
- Family memorabilia – use the baby for the maximum effect

Nieces and nephews:

Selection boxes are like currency to the under 10s.

I remember I used to collect all of my sweets each year like stickers and trade them off for things that I wanted. A £2 selection box to you and I is probably worth £5 on the black market so I'd double up on those to give them a head start in life.

Cinema vouchers work well. We went down that route last year and it hit the spot and then there are iTunes vouchers for the older ones so they can buy tons of happy hardcore to listen to. Failing that, a portable battery charger for their mobile phone seems a decent shout which would be useful and well (over)used.

Bry's quick guide:

- A lesson in life – give plenty of selection boxes and let them understand the value of a commodity, trading and theft
- Cinema voucher – it's a decent afternoon out
- iTunes voucher – big kids love zoning out with their phones in their hand
- Mobile power bank – to charge those phones

Associates:

A Christmas pint will suffice. While looking online it turns out most folk don't really want the small obligatory gift from their neighbours and friends.

We'll need the need to pass a gift to our closest non-relations just to demonstrate courtesy but in reality it's unnecessary. Unlike the rest of the aforementioned, these people would rather you buy them a drink so, plan, get together, make a night of it and split the bill. Voila!

Bry's quick guide:

- Tennents Ice Cold – pint of
- Corona – with slice of lime
- Vodka Coke
- Prosecco
- Shots – Christmas colours

Well that's what I'm going for this year and I hope what I've come up with can help you on your quest for an enjoyable, peaceful Christmas. Hopefully none of my relatives read this anymore or the game's a bogey for me but you're welcome.

Merry bloody Christmas my good people. See you on the other side...

Bryan Mackenzie
#121



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STEVE HOLCOMBE

ALL SUITED AND BOOTED OUR STEVE'S BEEN RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH THE GREAT AND GOOD OF THE MOTORCYCLE WORLD AT THE FIM GALA IN BERLIN...

One thing that couldn't have been further from my mind at the start of 2016 was the end-of-year FIM Gala – the annual get together and celebration of motorcycling's world champions. Even when I finally secured the Enduro 3 World Championship back in September it wasn't something I considered.

But my weekend in Berlin was a great experience. The hope of attending glitzy ceremonies isn't the reason any of us get into dirt bikes, but to be official recognised alongside champions from all other motorcycle disciplines was definitely something I'll not forget in a hurry.

I'm not one for getting dressed up too often, but it was cool (and a little strange) to meet up with Eero Remes, Giacomo Redondi and Matt Phillips away from the usual meeting places – special test walking, event paddock, etc. All of us had gone off and done our own thing since the end of the Enduro World Championship, so it was cool to catch up on what's being going on and what everyone's plans and thoughts are looking ahead to the 2017 series.

The event itself was really cool. Very well run, as I guess you'd expect, it was basically split in two – a press conference and then the main presentation ceremony. I know that a medal and a certificate aren't overly important in the grand scheme of things – knowing that I'm a world

champion is enough for me – but it is good to have the official FIM medal and certificate. It looks pretty good in my folk's kitchen!

Having never been to such a big 'do' it was interesting to meet and talk with other riders, or not as the case was with some. I guess some of the road racers prefer to keep themselves to themselves. Hands down the nicest guy at the event was Ryan Dungey. Not only did he come over and introduce himself to Matt Phillips and myself – like he needed to do that – but he chatted for a while, which was cool. It's always hard to really know what someone is like away from the race track, so knowing that Dungey is a genuinely nice guy, well, it's good to know.

As well as staying in a swanky hotel – and not needing to get up early to go walk special tests or dash to the airport like I normally do when staying away from home – it was also cool to take a look around Berlin. I enjoy learning about history so visiting the Berlin wall and generally taking a good look around the city was nice. Nice but cold.

One thing I didn't mention last month was that I've extended my agreement with Beta. I'm thrilled to be staying with the guys in Italy for 2017/18/19 and looking forward to it. Beta's world championship team is going to be two riders for 2017 – myself and Alex Salvini. I get on great with Alex, and owe him a lot as he allowed me to train with him at the start of 2016, so it should be a great set-up.

As you read this I'm in New Zealand. It was a bit of a mad rush to get everything ready to go after the FIM gala, but now I'm here, settling into things and over the horrendously long flights it's all good.

Once I'm back things will step up a gear as I'll get back on a bike seriously, and most likely head to Italy. A lot of the Italian riders head to Sardinia in January and I'm thinking of doing exactly that. Riding some of the sand tracks they have there and some of the trails form the ISDE in Sardinia sounds like a good way to start 2017 to me. I'll have had a good break by then and will be itching to get back riding again.

I'm not sure exactly what my plans are for January yet. I guess a trip to Finland or some place cold and snowy to start preparing for the opening EnduroGP event will be in there somewhere. Most likely spending time in Italy and Spain will feature highly on the agenda, I'll get things finalised while I'm here in NZ.

I guess all that's left for me to say is have a great Christmas and Happy New Year. Oh, and thanks again for all the support this year. Whatever you're wanting to do or achieve in 2017 I hope everything works out. Enjoy the challenges, keep it pinned and if you're at a race I'm at come over and say hi.

Happy New Year, here's to a good one.
Steve

Holcombe #70

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DANIEL GROVE

OUR FESTIVE LITTLE FREELANCER GIVES A LITTLE CREDIT TO THE THINGS – AND PEOPLE – WHO'VE MADE HIS YEAR SO AWESOME...

It's Christmas! Well, almost, or it might be depending on when you're reading this. If you're reading this on Christmas Day then you probably enjoy the whole festive period as much as I do – besides all the food what else is there? Oh yeah, the presents...

Regardless of what my girlfriend thinks I much prefer giving instead of receiving and I take a little bit of pride in getting gifts for people that I keep as a surprise. I mean, if a present isn't a surprise then there's no point in wrapping it is there? And if you do it's a waste of a tree or at least a branch...

It's difficult for people to buy me things as I don't really like anything and believe that a lot of things are overpriced so as you have probably guessed by now, I'm a bit of a scrooge! Or I'm just a normal bloke, you decide...

But as we're rounding out another year I think it's time for an award ceremony of some sort as there's been some pretty cool going's on in the motocross world in 2016, so I thought I'd put together the following list of winners in no particular order, all just for a bit of festive fun. Enjoy...

Rider of the year - **Tim Gajser**

Who else could it have been? This guy is the real deal and if you think he looks fast on TV then in person he is something else. It's mind blowing how he can ride a 450 the way he does. It's a shame that Romain Febvre ended his title hopes at the British GP so we'll never know what could have been but by this point Tim was on a roll and was so fast and consistent it wouldn't have been easy for Romain to claw the points back.

Track of the year! - **Culham**

The best track I rode all year was Culham back in September. It had rained all day the day before but come race day the sun was shining and with so many ruts in each corner – that formed perfectly and across the full width of the track – it was a great time to be alive and racing dirt bikes as you'll no doubt testify if you were there as well. Let's hope it's as good for the Maxxis season opener...

Riding gear of the year! -

O'Neal Vented Hardwear gear

I've been lucky to get my hands on some really nice riding gear this year and my favourite has to be this line of O'Neal gear in the hi-vis yellow and teal colour combo. Had the jeans been vented I'd put it out there that it was the best gear ever made but unfortunately it was just the shirt that

was fully vented. It was definitely my most worn gear this year and it still looks brand new!

Amateur Rider - **Jansen Day**

I've taken in a few AMCA Championship rounds this year and certainly got my money's worth. If I was to divide the number of hours that I was there on each Sunday to watch all the races for the fiver it costs to get in, it boils down to pence per hour but besides that there is some great racing to be seen.

Jansen Day's taking over the mantle of being the next best rider out of Bristol and he's also the first racer in any of the AMCA Championships that hasn't lined up at a Maxxis round. He took a race win towards the end of the year and if he can minimize some small mistakes and avoid some numpties in his class then 2017 could be really good for him.

Race of the year -

Wembley Arenacross Main Event

Now, I don't for one second condone direct contact in Arenacross, or motocross either for that matter. However unless you were there and saw the head-to-head race between Cedric Soubeyras and Cyrille Coulon prior to the main then it just looks like Cyrille is the bad guy when he really isn't. There was action everywhere, the crowd was on their feet as soon as the gate dropped and I was trying to get some tweets out for @dbm magazine but it was just impossible to do so! This round will be a sell out again next year with the local Londoners expecting more of the same...

Product of the year - **JT chain and sprockets**

I've seen the advert for these products in this magazine for years and if I've seen them chances are you have as well. I was supplied with some JT hardware this year for the long-term RM-Z and the chain and sprockets lasted so long that the bike went back to Suzuki HQ with it on the bike, with loads of life left in them, after a solid five months of use. Impressive for sure and when the test rider bubble bursts I know what product to run in the running gear department.

Person of the year - **Shaun Simpson**

On the Friday prior to the British MXGP I was tasked with attending a Scott MTB Media Ride on their latest mountain bikes and then put together a feature for this magazine which you may have seen in the Summer issue with Jake Nicholls on the cover. Anyway, I had to ride the bikes,

interview the riders, then type it all up.

With it being my first gig of this nature it's safe to say that no one knew me, especially the riders, however I asked Shaun if he had a few minutes afterwards as he was talking to one of the Scott guys and he said he did, despite not knowing who or where I was. I went back to my van with nowhere near enough content to put a feature together and I was ready to hit the panic button but Shaun kept to his word, swung by my van and then gave me some really good info on how he puts his Scott MTB to use in Belgium.

Coollest thing of the year - **Austin Forkner**

This kid is the going to be the next big thing in American motocross. I have no doubt about it. Look up the video of his sighting lap whip over the Skyshot jump at Unadilla on his Instagram - @austinforkner - that was posted on August 14. It's pretty ridiculous but there's nothing better than a cheering crowd and a top rider playing up to it. Good lad.

Media shindig of the year -

Fox Legion enduro line launch

It was that good I wrote a whole column about it a few issues back. I'll keep it short this time but the highlights were the free food, beer and riding gear. And a badass gear bag. Not to mention meeting Dave Thorpe and him buying me a pint, as well as sitting opposite Taddy Blazusiak during the meal and then riding with him the following day. It was an awesome 24 hours...

British motocross magazine editor of the year -

Anthony Sutton

There can only be one winner of this can't there? This guy has the patience of a saint and generally when I am asked something by him I respond with a question. In fact over the last two and a bit years I have probably asked this guy more questions than what I have asked everyone else in the world combined in my 30 years of roaming this planet.

Besides the patience, the opportunity to continually fill this page up as well as hooking me up with attending some cool events and being on the receiving end of some awesome products to use and abuse, I'll remember 2016 for various reasons but he'll be responsible for most of the cool stuff that I've done this year. He's also responsible for converting me into liking four-stroke dirt bikes. Should he be thanked for that? You decide...

Daniel Grove



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It's a little known fact that if one of our columnists fails to get his words in on time we dig out an embarrassing shot of them that they probably don't want the world to see. Since Jake – aka Taped Nipples – failed to hit his deadline this month here he is prepping his neck brace between Maxxis championship motos...

JAKE NICHOLLS



SAINT PAUL!

WHEN IT COMES TO OFF-ROAD SPORT, FEW RIDERS HAVE BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL EITHER ON OR OFF THE BIKE AS PAUL EDMONDSON...

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Nuno Laranjeira**

You'd be hard pushed put to find an enduro rider with a more successful career than Paul Edmondson. Multiple British and Spanish titles, four world titles, one European crown, an AMA championship and a record-breaking 18 ISDE gold medals speak for themselves and there's even a British MX championship moto win on his CV.

He's also one of the country's most successful event promoters and – just to top it off – this year he helped guide his eldest son, Jack, to the Enduro Youth Cup world championship.

I've known Fast Eddy since we were C Class trials rivals 40 years ago although, being honest, 'rivals' implies we were on a similar level – the truth is I never even got even close to beating him. With his head of angelic blond curls you'd have thought butter wouldn't melt in his mouth but even as a nipper 'Little

Ed' was a fierce competitor on a bike and, off one, was already demonstrating a sharp mind for business inherited from his father Pete.

At an early Dirt Bike Show he went around the stands collecting free stickers, then packaged them up and sold them off. He didn't miss a trick then and he doesn't miss a trick now – next year, for instance, he's running the British round of the Enduro World Championship with a radical new format that could shake up the sport.

It's fitting that it will be at Hawkstone Park where in 1998 he organised the country's first high-profile cross country race.

Winning and earning are both constant factors in Paul's career and, while he was racing, the pair were intrinsically linked. Take, for example, his decision at the end of 1990 to leave KTM – where he'd enjoyed two super-successful seasons – for Husqvarna and a bike he didn't rate... >>



Fast Eddy teamed up with Knighter in 2002 on the UFO Yamaha squad



A young Paul poses with Andrew Codina and pals – including author Sean Lawless – during a break in shooting for the BBC's Stopwatch programme...



Although an ace MX bike the 2003 CR250 wasn't the best woods weapon around...



FAMILY ALLOWANCE

THE NEXT GENERATION

After a gap of 20 years there was another Edmondson world enduro champion in 2016 – Paul's eldest son Jack.

Steered by Paul, the 19-year-old won the Enduro Youth Cup in just his second year of world competition which is a source of obvious pride for his dad.

"I threw him into the world championships last year and he's managed to win a title this season. I'm extremely proud of him – and extremely skint as well! We've had to sponsor him – it's like when I first started and Derrick and dad funded me. They took me around and we've had to do the same with him. There's no ifs or buts about it, I'm extremely proud and I wouldn't have not spent the money to see what he's achieved.

"We've invested in him and I've travelled the world for the last two years and had a great time, seen him ride exceptionally good and I've also seen him make a lot of mistakes. At the same time he's leaned a hell of a lot by throwing him in at the deep end in the world championship."

Jack's certainly benefitted from his dad's wealth of experience – just as Paul had the benefit of having Derrick in his corner – but it's

not always been the smoothest of rides for the father and son team.

"Sometimes I want to pull my teeth out and I have to tell myself that he's young and is bound to make mistakes – I have to hold back sometimes, I'm not going to lie – but he's achieved a hell of a lot in a short amount of time.

"He only started in April last year and this year he did his first ISDE and finished 33rd overall and got a gold medal. I've worked my arse off with him but he's deserved all the help and got the results."

Next year Paul will switch his attentions to his younger son, Harry, leaving Jack to make his own way in the world but in true Edmondson fashion he's made sure his eldest lad is playing the long game.

"While he's been riding he's been studying and he's now a qualified electrician but he deserves something more. We're sat here now and it's the middle of November and we're still none the wiser. We've got Jamie Dobb helping us and hopefully something will come through.

"How far he can go is really in his hands now. I think he can go a lot further and I think he will but the programme we've got as a family is that each kid will get two years of full support and then hopefully they'll get picked up by a team and move on in their own way but with us in the background. And that's how it should be.

"Harry's next in line and what I've learned with Jack I'll put into him. He's 16 in January and will just have a year with me really, doing a lot of practising and training and spending time on the bike. He'll do lots of events in the UK and we'll probably throw him into the world enduro at Hawkstone Park because it's the type of format that he's used to.

"If he does well and enjoys it we'll see what the following year will bring."

"In '91 I went to Husqvarna and stayed there until 1993," he says. "I tried the bikes and wasn't impressed with them – they gave me an old bike to try which I wasn't exactly jumping up and down about – but with KTM the budget was only there to continue at the same money we'd been on."

"It was steady money but only steady – I'd won two world championships [in '89 the European 125cc series was a world championship in everything but name] and had back-to-back ISDE class wins as well and I wanted more money. It's in my blood to look for the best deal."

But we're racing ahead of ourselves so let's rewind to Fast Eddy's formative years.

Born in Otley in 1969, Paul spent three years living in North Yorkshire before the family moved to the Midlands where his dad made Wassell motorbikes. Paul's parents – Pete and Kath – are legendary figures in off-road sport and his big brother Derrick is a multi-time British enduro champion so it's safe to say it's not just wheeling and dealing that's in the Edmondson blood.

"I started riding a motorcycle probably I would think around the age of four or five. It was an Italjet with Wassell stickers on it. I didn't have much choice, I was always going to ride motorbikes. With the old man tinkering like he did it was definitely bred into me."

"I was probably around seven or eight when I joined the famous TY80 gang and started riding trials. I think everyone from that generation were members of that. There wasn't really any other choice. It went TY80, then Whitehawk, then up to the Majestys even though the bike was bigger than me."

Paul was a bloody good trials rider but, by his own admission, he was never going to challenge for major titles.

"To be fair I was always a bit off being part of the elite gang. In the schoolboy trials scene I was good but I was never going to be the best. No way. There was Julian Ingham, Andrew Clinkard and then every time a round came up north Martin Craven would bust a few out. There was a lot of good riders."

"When I was 13 or 14 I started to do AMCA motocross in the Juniors on an 80cc Honda. I did well in my first race because it was muddy and got a bit of a bug for it and that's how I progressed into hare and hounds with the AMCA."

"I went from Junior to Senior to Expert and progressed from a CR80 small-wheel to a CR80 big-wheel. I was never tall and short legs was my downfall in trials. The lads with the long legs always seemed to get away with things I couldn't. I'd have a five and then the teddy would come out of the pram – mine in the section and the old man's on the way home!"

Pretty much everyone who's ridden at youth level knows the pivotal role played by parents and Paul's no exception.

"My old man was a massive, massive driving force and my mother was as well. Every weekend they would take me to events and basically do whatever I wanted. Some of the cross countries were miles away in West Wales so there was a lot of travelling involved and they didn't bat an eyelid but they expected me to try my hardest."

"There was not so much pressure to start with but there were a few questions towards the latter stages of the trials when he was expecting me to do a little bit better."

Very much an all-rounder in his teens, Paul would try his hand at anything off-road and when his trials career started to falter he was already beginning to shine in other disciplines.

"I started winning the hare and hounds stuff quite quickly which began the transition to the big bikes. We were on Hondas – Trevor Kemp was the manager back then who used to help Derrick and that's how the Honda big-wheel/TLM50/TLR250 came about. Those were the bikes that I had from Honda UK to kinda do what I wanted with."

"That's what I was riding when my proper career started doing national trials, the Scottish Six Days, Manx Two Days and all the hare and hounds and eventually with the big-wheeled Honda in 1986 I did my first ISDE."

Alongside hotly tipped Lancashire teenager Julian Ingham, Paul rode the Scottish Six Days Trial on a 50cc Honda. He may or may not have been underage but, if he knows, Paul's not telling. Whether he was or wasn't, it's an early example of his refusal to conform, his tendency to take a leftfield approach that would later

shape his career.

"I can't disclose how old I was. Maybe I was 15 but I'm not sure. I had an Isle of Man licence and I think Julian had a Rochdale licence! We were either 15 or 16 but it's a bit questionable because the six days is in May and my birthday's in July."

"I don't know why I did the six days. I think when I was young I did some really, really daft things with the riding job. All I wanted to do was ride and it didn't matter if it was a trial, a motocross, a cross-country – anything. I just wanted to be on a bike. I absolutely loved riding."

In 1987 Paul left Honda for Yamaha in a deal engineered by Roger Harvey and continued to mix and match his events with considerable success despite a packed schedule.

"I spent two years riding in England on Yamahas for Roger focussing on motocross, enduros and trials. In '87 I did the Colmore Cup and finished second to Eddy Lejeune, I did the Scott Trial, I did British motocross, I did the Scottish Six Day Trial where I managed to ride most of the week with Martin Lampkin which was great."

"I did the Natterjack British Enduro Championship round on the Saturday and Sunday and then flew up to Fort William to do the Scottish. I did the Scott on a Saturday and then drove down to Canada Heights to do a British motocross round on the Sunday. It was proper old-school. If you asked a rider to do that now they'd think you were nuts. And probably rightly so."

Paul was proving himself to be a 125cc specialist and on a muddy day at Nympsfield, competing against riders including Jamie Dobb, Alan Morrison and Paul Malin's elder brother Darren, he took a last moto win.

"There was a hill that was real snotty and I was pretty much the only one who could get up every lap. Because of what I was riding, any time it was hard like that it was easy for me to do. Dobby was like the young star coming up then. He does get reminded of that every now and again – to this day he's not happy about it!"

Just as with trials, Paul was a gifted motocross rider but he was never going to be the best. Fortunately, he had another string to his bow.

"Derrick was an influence pretty much when I turned 17 and was trying to get a deal and he helped out. After I did the ISDE in France when I was 18 Derrick came with me to KTM and Cagiva to test the bikes. That's when he stepped in to make sure I was doing the right thing."

"We drove out to Italy first to ride the Cagiva and then we got the offer to try the KTMs with Farioli. So we tried both bikes, decided which one I wanted and from there we just nipped up to Austria and signed the contract."

The combination of Paul and a 125cc KTM proved to be a potent one and in his first year he raced to the European enduro title and then backed this up the following season when he was crowned the inaugural world 125cc enduro champion.

"The status got switched from European championship to world championship in 1990 and again on a KTM I won it that year as well. I had pretty much the same bike for two years and, to be honest, I don't remember a fat lot about those two seasons other than for the first year I was supported more by Farioli and in 1990 I got more support from the factory."

"That was the year when Julian Stevens was my mechanic after he switched from motocross with Mervyn Anstie. His love was always enduro although he was a top motocross mechanic."

At the time Husqvarna was owned by Cagiva and, after the Italians' bigger chequebook tempted Paul away from KTM, he came close to making it a hat-trick of titles before he broke his collarbone while leading the world championship.

"It was a daft mistake when I had a massive points lead – I just tucked the front and it spat me over. Derrick was mechanicing for me and according to him I'd only dislocated it so when I rode out the end of the special test he got the doctor to try and put it back in."

"It was pretty painful but, being young and daft, if big brother said it was dislocated then it was dislocated. I don't think Derrick's got any medical qualifications to be fair – he could just see his bonus slipping away, same as me. >>



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A pensive Paul mentally preps himself for an edition of The Tough One



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"I flew home, went to see Gordon Hadfield, got it plated and then flew back out the following weekend to finish the championship. I think I still had a small points lead but I lost the championship."

The frustration of losing his title impacted on Paul the following year when he slipped from second to third in the world championship.

"I had a bad season in '92. There are no excuses, it just didn't come together for me and I spent most of the time on my back. I was probably trying too hard. When you're used to winning the world championship and then lose it because of a broken collarbone I was as you can imagine as determined as ever."

Paul bounced back in 1993, regaining the world title. By a happy coincidence it coincided with the end of his Husky deal.

"That was a good year and I had a real fight with my team-mate Petteri Sylvan. It was great to regain the world title and really good for bargaining power, especially just coming to the end of my contract. I felt like everything had dropped back into place. The six days in '93 was in Holland and I was second to a Dutchman – surprise, surprise – but it was still a good result and a really good year."

Back on top and out of contract Paul found his services in big demand and, typically, he made the most of his increased commercial appeal with a surprise move.

"After that year things really began to change a lot for me. My contract was coming to the end of its term and I'd always been tight with the Shirt family and they'd got this famous Gas Gas. It was a Kawasaki chassis with a TM engine. Again I was looking at a few options and trying to get my salary up a little bit, Shirty put me forward and the next thing you know me and Derrick were on a plane going to Girona in Spain to test the bike."

"I kinda jumped on it and rode it. I wasn't blown away by it and neither was Derrick but I could see the pound signs! It was a good deal and rather than be on a team with five other riders these guys were keen to build a team just around me. They wanted to win but didn't really know what to do to win and that's where we came in."

"Before we knew it we were in a meeting discussing financial terms. When I told them what I wanted Derrick nearly swallowed his tongue. For the time it was a fairly big demand because I was quite confident. I basically said 'if you want to win this is what it will cost you'. It was probably a bit daft but it sounds good in a meeting!"

When you talk the talk you need to walk the walk and Paul strutted to his third world title as he strung together a great debut season with the Spanish manufacturer...

"I had a few DNFs that year with mechanicals but '94 was a really good year for me. I won the Spanish championship, the world championship and my class in the six days. I couldn't do all >>>



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A talented trials rider Paul always excelled on technical going

the Brit rounds but the ones I did I won.

"The 125 suited me down to the ground. Back then they weren't the strongest of engines but they were still good and, obviously, Gas Gas used the TM engine which was a proven product and had a lot more power than most."

With back-to-back world titles in the 125cc class Paul was ready for a new challenge and moved up a class for the 1995 season.

"That was definitely a challenge because I'd been a 125 rider my whole career. I had ridden 250 two-strokes but I'd never ridden a Gas Gas with a 250 two-stroke TM engine. It was a bit lively and I just found it hard to get on with – in typical European-style conditions it was a bit of a handful.

"I was also against some great riders. Giovanni Sala, Stephane Peterhansel – there were some great, great riders who were very experienced and probably a little bit more sensible on the throttle than myself. It was a hard year. I finished fourth which I was proper disappointed with. I used to hate not winning. I still do now but at 47 I can accept it."

Every year Gas Gas used to throw an end-of-season party that featured bikes and booze in equal measure. I got an invitation in 1995 and along with John Shirt Jnr, DBR test rider Tony Marshall and a bunch of assorted cerveza monsters hit the town with Paul who was treated like royalty at every bar and club we drank at.

The following day Paul was on top form, hitting a big double jump and laying the Gasser flat in front of the assembled Gas Gas top brass. It was an impressive show – especially as he was fast asleep in the back of a car! Suffering the after-effects of too many JD and Cokes, he'd called on Tony to act as a stand-in while he recovered from the previous night's excesses.

"I signed either a two or a three-year contract with them. I'm not sure but I know I was three years with Gas Gas and once I got part of the family I knew I could have a few beers.

"It didn't matter who you rode for or where you lived, you just wanted to go there for the party. The Gas Gas family thing back then was really, really nice. It was a pretty small concern with a shitty old factory with my caravan parked round the back which used to trip all the electrics out in the factory. They were great days.

"At the end of the season they used to love to party, eat paella and drink as much wine as possible. Those were the days of me being world enduro champion and Jordi Tarres being world trials champion so they >>



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had plenty to celebrate. They also treated all the importers and their riders – no matter what championships they'd won everyone got a mention and a prize. They just seemed super-grateful."

He may have been partying in the off-season but Paul, determined to make amends for his mistakes in 1995, was working hard and the following year was arguably the best of his career.

The TM power plant had been discarded in favour of Gas Gas' own engine and, remarkably, he took it to the world title.

"Julian Stevens came back on board with me along with a guy called Boni Geevlin – he worked at Gas Gas for many, many years and now he's with Sherco as one of their two-stroke development people. They did everything from pretty much developing it to spanning on it, the whole lot.

"It was massive to win a world title in the first year with a new engine but we didn't just win the world championship, we won the British championship, the Spanish championship and were second overall at the ISDE behind Sala. The work that went into prepping and checking – it was pretty much the first time they put six gears into a bike as well – was huge and the results were pretty special."

After three years and two world titles with Gas Gas it was time for another change and Paul was looking for a fresh challenge. He could have switched manufacturers or changed class but, instead, he set his sights on a new continent and signed to race the American GNCC and hare scrambles series for Suzuki.

"I thought I wanted to do something a bit different – I was the first world championship rider to go there. Jamie Dobb was racing over there and he knew someone who knew someone and an offer came through. The bonuses were really good and that really tempted me too. I'd done three years with Gas Gas and won two world championships with them and felt the time was right to go and do something else.

"At first I thought I'd try and stay out as long as I could but I was only allowed to stay for up to three months anyway because of visa requirements and, typical me, I never applied to do it properly. I had Doc Wobbly [Evo bike-builder to the stars Robin Walters] with me and he knew the States inside out so he was my guide for the first 12 months. It was great – me and him on tour over there, what could possibly have gone wrong!"

What went wrong was a bad injury that scuppered his debut year in the States and restricted him to 10th in the GNCC series.

"We started off really, really strong but what knackered >>

Paul and his younger brother Lee show the strain of six days in the saddle





me there – and had a big effect on the rest of my career – was I had a big crash. It was on the east coast at one of the GNCCs, the back end stepped out and I went straight into a tree. I was leading the hare scrambles and had just started to find my feet in the GNCC. I blew my knee out and proper made a mess of my ligaments and that finished the season for me. I missed half the year.”

The differences between the EWC and GNCC have been well documented but Paul – blazing a trail later followed by Juha Salminen, David Knight and Shane Watts – adapted quickly.

“It wasn’t just about going fast for 10 minutes in a special test, it was a three-hour race and you had to go fast for the whole three hours but it didn’t take me long to adjust. The Suzuki team was doing hare scrambles and GNCC and the GNCCs were on the east coast and we started on the west coast with hare scrambles. The first one I ever did I ran out of fuel and the second one I did I won.”

The 1998 season started off with Paul on the back foot after he dislocated his shoulder the day before the opening round and he couldn’t pull back the points deficit, eventually finishing the GNCC in 10th. Improving to fifth in 1999, he then signed for Kawasaki for Y2K.

“I did three years with Suzuki but I just struggled – my heart wasn’t completely in it and I wasn’t riding well at all. The bike wasn’t too bad, it was a little bit aggressive but even so I just wasn’t riding how I should have been.

“In 2000 I won the hare scrambles and was second in GNCC to Shane Watts. That was the best year I had over there. I did two years with Kawasaki – 2000 and 2001 – but I fell out of love with America. I was back with Wobs and we were travelling to and from – by the time I’d finished I just got burned out with it. Towards the end it just wasn’t working and I’d had enough.”

Paul’s final year Stateside was in 2001 and then he returned to the EWC with Husqvarna.

“I was back into Europe in 2002 and back with into one of my old teams riding a 250 four-stroke for Husqvarna – possibly the slowest but most enjoyable bike I’ve ever rode – and finished second.

“After that year there was the UFO Yamaha team on a 125 with Knighter on a 500. I was fired up and finished second in the first round of the world championship and then broke a collarbone and some ribs practising for the second round. It took me a long time to get back from that – a lot of the races were back-to-back and I missed a couple and ended up sixth.” >>



FAST EDDY ON...

DAVID KNIGHT

"I get on good with David. Obviously, I've played quite a big part in his career helping him and he's played quite a big part in mine keeping me riding faster for longer."

"I was still battling with David from the ripe old age of 38 to 40. He was one step above me then but I could still keep him on his toes. We were from different generations with different styles and different characters."

BRITISH TITLES

"I'm guessing I've won maybe 10 class titles in the British championship and overall probably four or five. I won a lot but probably not enough – don't forget I also did the Spanish championship and spent five years in America."

THE ISDE

"I used to love the ISDE. It was very much an end-of-year event. You're representing your country, you get to see riders from all over the world and it's very prestigious. It's a great event. I was second in '96 which was my best overall result which replicates Derrick who was second overall in 1985."





Since quitting racing himself Paul has become one of the most respected promoters in the sport

PRO PROMO ED LOOKS AHEAD...

Fast Eddy has become synonymous with cross country events and he started the ball rolling in 1998 when he flew in American ace Steve Hatch to take on David Knight at a hare scramble he was organising at Hawkstone Park.

Still in his prime as a rider, with the benefit of hindsight Paul thinks his move into promotion may have taken the edge off his performance as a racer.

"If I'm honest I probably started doing events too early in my career. It meant I wasn't totally focussed on racing. That's why I'm so respectful of Graham Jarvis. As a rider he's totally dedicated and that's all he does. The great Mika Ahola was the same. He didn't win world enduro championships until he was getting a lot older but his life was dedicated to racing. Graham's exactly the same but if I'm honest I just transitioned over too early.

"I had a guy close to me who was advising a little bit who actually witnessed my crash in America – he was stood next to the tree I hit. His argument was it could have been a lot worse and that I needed to be thinking of my future. If I did have a serious accident I'd have had no money coming in – there wasn't enough money going around to be able to retire on what I'd earned. That's why I did pretty much start running events from then.

"We were only running about three events a year but I think that did take the edge off me as a rider."

Paul drew on his experience of US racing to build a framework for his events.

"What we did initially was to bring a high-profile cross-country race series to England. We were trying to replicate what was happening in America although realistically that was never going to happen for the simple reason that everything was bigger in America and there were more riders over there.

"We did have some good days early on before everybody jumped on the bandwagon but we set the trend. We picked some great venues such as Matchams Park, Hawkstone Park and

Trentham Gardens and it was a massive success that got me established as an event promoter.

"The event promotion is still going strong. It's changed direction a few times but all in a good way and that keeps me mega, mega busy."

Next year will see Paul go full circle and, 19 years after his first event, he'll return to Hawkstone Park where he's staging the GP of the UK. It won't be a traditional EWC round though – Paul's taking a radical new approach.

"It's weird to think now we not only get to run a world enduro at Hawkstone but also it's in a different format. The promoter Alain Blanchard has decided he wants to throw a couple of different style events into the calendar.

"We explained to him that in the UK to get places like Llanidloes for proper enduros is very difficult. Land is a massive issue in the UK and he's said that if I think that format will work and will bring spectators to the event then go for it because if it's a success and the riders like it then it opens the door for other people in other countries to do it."

The September event will feature a sprint enduro with MX and woods specials tests and an arena section on the Saturday followed by a three-hour XC race on the Sunday.

"It'll replicate what David and Steve Hatch did in '98. Again, it'll rip their hands to bits and sort the men out from the boys. The FIM really liked the proposal we put forward and Alain Blanchard was behind it so we got the green light.

"I'm excited about it. It'll be something different. It's not proper enduro – let's get that straight – but at least there will be an atmosphere there because people will be able to witness racing going on, especially on the Sunday.

"We've got Steve Holcombe, the McCanney brothers, Nathan Watson – when it comes to young talent we've got the best coming through. The standard of riding is massively on the up. Let's hope the people who come to see it go away thinking they've seen something really good.

"We know what we're doing, we just need to build the razzamatazz back into it and get the spectators there to support the riders."

He changed things around again in 2004, hooking up with an old boss to set up his own world championship team and finished second behind Salminen in the new E2 class.

"I got the chance to run my own team through Roger Harvey on a CR250 two-stroke – he managed to find a budget to promote the bike and he gave it to us. We had a two-year project. It was great for Weston Beach Race but it had to be tamed down for world enduros. Karl Prestwood did all the engines and he did a very good job. I was teamed up with Paul Whibley and we had great bikes.

"To get second in '04 was probably pretty much the best I could have wished for. Realistically, to be world champion again would have been very, very tough unless someone like Farioli took me back on board.

"But I was struggling a bit financially trying to run the teams – it cost a lot to travel for the world championship

– and from '05 onwards I took a back seat with it, bit the bullet and said enough is enough."

The 2005 season was Paul's final full year in the EWC and after parting company with Honda he was back with Suzuki but the fire in his belly was by now pretty much out.

"In 2006 and 2007 I was on Suzuki and we just did the odd race and 2008 was the last world championship race I did with a one-off ride at Llanidloes. My last ISDE was 2012 in Germany so I probably stopped riding properly in 2013 but my world championship dream was pretty much over in 2006.

"Looking back I wouldn't change anything. Absolutely not. My career has been a great one, it's been a challenging one, it's been a different one. I'm looking forward now to being part of the next generation of Edmondsons and seeing what my boys can achieve."







GUN FOR HIRE

**MALCOLM STEWART WAS THE MAN TO BEAT IN THIS YEAR'S
EAST COAST 250 SUPERCROSS SERIES SO WHY IS BUBBA'S
BABY BRO STILL STRUGGLING TO FIND A RIDE?**

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira



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Did you hear the story about the reigning AMA Supercross champion who couldn't get a deal for the following year? Neither had we until news began to emerge from the USA that **Malcolm Stewart was without a ride for 2017.**

It's hard to believe that the man who won the 2016 East Coast 250 SX title would be struggling to get a deal for his move into the 450 class but, for the moment at least, that's the case.

It was also the case last summer when he couldn't get a ride for the AMA Nationals but when the gate drops for the opening round of the 2017 series at Anaheim's Angel Stadium on January 7 the smart money is on Malcolm being there.

"Finding a team for 2017 has been kinda difficult for me," admits the 22-year-old at the recent Lille SX. "I did everything I was

supposed to do by winning a championship."

Malcolm's decision to sit out the 2016 Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championship wasn't entirely his own – outside factors he couldn't control forced his hand – but there's no denying that not being in the shop window throughout the summer hasn't helped his cause.

"People think that maybe me taking off outdoors wasn't a good idea but I was put in the situation with not having an outdoor contract or anything. It was kinda like I would have to ride a 250F for free so I was in a sticky situation.

"I felt at the time it was a good decision and to me today it still makes sense why I didn't race outdoors. My contract was for supercross only and once I won the championship there was not enough time to get the [outdoor] contract through and I would have been basically riding for free. On top of that I would have been on a 250F and I felt

that didn't make sense.

"It's kinda hard to do contracts and ride a 250F because originally because my contract was supercross-only I didn't focus on any outdoors. It wasn't a planned idea and I wasn't expecting anything. Even when a rider got hurt on a 450 the offer never came up because that discussion never even happened from the beginning.

"The bottom line is I did what I had to do and here we are coming into 2017 and I don't have anything but overall my goal is to show up at Anaheim 1 – I just got to figure out what bike I want to do and try to do whatever I can."

Racing a Honda with support from Geico, Malcolm's posted a string of solid results in the autumn European SX events including a third on the first night at Lille so he's shown he can handle the extra power that comes with a 450.

"Moving to the 450 class is a big step but it's a step that everyone has to make. I'm just glad >>





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FAMILY TIES

Being Bubba's baby brother

Growing up with a superstar brother can be a double-edged sword – on one hand there are the advantages of increased exposure and great industry contacts, on the other the weight of expectation and increased pressure to perform that goes with having a famous surname.

At one point it looked as though Malcolm wasn't even going to follow his big brother James' path and, instead, become a professional fisherman.

Eventually turning pro in 2011, his rise through the ranks has hardly been rapid – until 2016 his best season SX finish was sixth on the West Coast in 2014 – but pressure to perform to his brother's standards doesn't appear to have been a factor.

"It wasn't hard growing up racing in James' shadow. It wasn't as hard as people think it was. Of course, there were a lot of expectations. People say 'James went 24-0' but I am my own person. We're two totally different people and at the end of the day he had to be the person he is today to be where he is now. Everything that he's accomplished, he had to be serious.

"I was kinda like the red-headed stepchild where I goofed off and did what I wanted because I could but now I'm growing up and I've got bills to pay. So it wasn't that much of a shadow – like I say I kinda goofed off and I was able to do whatever.

"The media can kinda take it a lot further than what it really was but at the end of the day I know we all worked together – family's first."



that I've washed my hands of the Lites class and all my unfinished business is done. My goal was to win a championship and I wasn't leaving the class until I won one and now I'm available to move up I'm focussing on new goals.

"Usually the first goal is to do good during the first season, my first goal is actually just to get a motorcycle!"

Preparing for the intensity of a 17-round 450SX season that gives riders just one weekend off in four months of racing is a tough task for even the most experienced pros. Going into his rookie season with no guaranteed team – and facing a much longer series than he's used to – makes this all the harder for Malcolm who must keep himself motivated despite the uncertainty.

"Motivation wise it's a little disturbing because I don't know exactly what I'm going to do. I have a plan in my head but the plan is constantly changing – y'know, I'm waiting for answers and time's running out.

"I love racing – I've been doing it for 18 years – so as far as motivation for me throwing my leg over a dirt bike that has not changed but waiting for answers back from teams is annoying because you don't know exactly when you're going to get the answer back. I've heard so many stories and excuses that it gets to the point where, let's just say, it's annoying."

The 2016 SX season was closely-fought all year and Malcolm had to wait until the final round in Las Vegas to clinch the title and follow his big brother James into the AMA record >>







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books. After finishing seventh the previous year it was a big turnaround in his fortunes and one he gives his Geico team full credit for.

"I feel like the team did a great job – they supported me to win the championship. I've always been fast and I've been on plenty enough teams before then. A team can make a champion if it's the right timing so I'm thankful for Geico."

Although he didn't figure in the team's outdoor plans and appears to be out in the cold next year, Malcolm is keen to emphasise his ongoing relationship with the team.

"I'm not bashing anybody at all. If it was bad blood by any means Geico wouldn't still be helping me to this day. They helped me get my parts and stuff over here to Lille and all the overseas races I'm doing. So there's no bad blood between me and the team – the team did a great job."

The confidence that he had great backing – something he's missing at the moment – was a big factor in his mindset going into the 2016 SX season.

"It was just knowing I had a team under me that was going to support me. The team hired a trainer as well so that kinda helped out a lot and still to this day he helps me out because me and him have got a good bond but I'm sure once Anaheim comes around we're going to kinda have to part ways just because he's under Geico, he doesn't work for Malcolm Stewart."

"That's kinda how we left it but, like I said, the team's being cool and supporting me and helping me out."

With the team providing the tools to do the job and an environment he was happy in, James and Geico Team Manager Mike LaRocco pitched in to provide the final title-winning pieces of the puzzle. >>



TRAVELLING MAN

Super fly guy!

All top AMA pros have to deal with putting in the miles – it's a huge country and the indoor and outdoor series go from coast to coast – but the elite riders take it to another level.

Luckily for Malcolm, hitting the road – and skies – and experiencing different cultures isn't an issue for him.

"I like travelling believe it or not. I've always liked travelling, I've always wanted to come over here so the first time I came over for Geneva was cool."

"Of course the food's different, the culture's different, the way people dress, people don't even speak your language but it's pretty cool – if I wasn't coming over here for racing I'd come over to visit for sure in my off-time."

"The next visit I want to do is to Tokyo. I want to experience what it's like over there and I think it will be cool."



RACES FOR RACES!

Breaking down the barriers...

Racing motorcycles has historically been a predominantly 'white' thing so when James and, later, Malcolm started to make headlines many people in the sport hoped they were breaking down barriers.

Up until now this doesn't appear to have been the case but what's Malcolm's take on different races doing races?

"The reason why I would say most African-Americans have not joined in racing dirt bikes is because first off – whether it's African-American, white, Chinese, it doesn't matter – it's expensive to do this. We're looking at six or seven grand on top of boots, helmets, gear and then showing up at a track with gas...

"We're looking at 10-plus grand just to try it out whereas I can go to Walmart and get a pigskin for 25 bucks and throw it around and see if I like that sport. On top of that at most schools you can already do soccer, football, swimming – it's already offered if you're in a decent school.

"I feel you have to want to race dirt bikes and maybe most African-Americans don't."

"Of course James helped me. There were times when I had a bad race like St Louis where I crashed three or four times and I lost nine or 10 points in one race and he helped me get my head straight.

"I remember LaRocco kept calling me and sending me links about mental control and stuff like that. It's hard to explain the situation when you've never been in it. It's a great, amazing feeling [to be leading a championship] but there's also a lot of weight on your shoulders and you've just got to accept that and go through it.

"At first I wasn't accepting because sometimes when you know when you've put all the work in you're almost scared to fail because you're so deep into it you know that if you fail you'll feel like you'll just fall off the face of the earth.

"I had to accept that I will fail if I was going to succeed. It's weird but you have to accept failure before you can move on and that's what I accepted and I think that that's what helped me out."

Malcolm and James have been recently spotted riding Yamahas together but the possibility of a privateer Team Stewart rocking up at Anaheim seems unlikely.

"I've thought about doing a Stewart team

since I turned pro but we all know there's a lot of money involved in riding dirt bikes and the money to the risk is a lot but being this late in the game trying to come up with sponsors who've already passed their budgets for next year is kinda hard.

"It's kinda hard to go to a team and ask for anything so it's got to come out of your own pocket. For pair of Yoshimura pipes you're looking at \$1500 so it gets very expensive.

"Am I being over-dramatic? No. But I just know going from a factory team to a privateer team what you can and can't get and I would have to do it properly if I was going to do it on my own.

"My goal for 2017 is to land a factory ride, do good in supercross and hopefully do good enough to land a ride for 2018."

For now a big question mark hangs over Malcolm's 2017 prospects but he's determined that his future still lies in racing.

"When you don't have anywhere to go where do you go? You've got to keep your head strong. No matter what, I'm going to be here. Whether I'm racing or on the sidelines I'm still going to help kids achieve their goals so I may not race but I'm not going to get driven out of the sport. But as it stands right now I will be racing."





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THE ONLY WAY IS ESSEX FOR TOOFAST MAX AS HE TAKES ON THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT (AKA THE M25) TO VISIT ONE OF THE SOUTH EAST'S MOST AMAZING PRACTICE FACILITIES – THE MILK RUN...

Words and photos by **Max Hind**

The Milk Run is a father and son operated motocross practice facility conveniently located just off the M25 near the Thurrock Services in Essex. The Milk Run is a relatively young track, this unsuspecting wooded strip of land next to the Essex Arena stockcar and speedway facility and was acquired just over four years ago before being transformed into a dirt bike sanctuary.

The current management team – Kevin Maxsted and his son Matthew – took over the facility this year. Since then the facility has undergone immense changes and in the summer the track had a major face lift. The result was a very technical, supercross inspired layout.

This was great for the faster riders amongst us but the average rider found this new layout a little too technical. Kevin and his team are always open to feedback and they are always listening to their customer base, they took onboard the criticism and dialled back the severity of the layout and the obstacles in order to create a far more inviting and much less frightening track. This is the circuit that greeted DBR when we decided to check out the Milk Run.

The Milk Run is open Saturdays and Sundays from 10 until 4. On Wednesdays during the summer the track is open from 12:30 – 6:30 for those of you who like an after school/work ride. Typically you'll have an open session on a Wednesday, unless it's the school holidays. In that case the session is split

into kids and adults.

Another cool thing on a Wednesday is that if you arrive after work or school Kevin has a deal in which the adults only pay £20 and the kids only £15. If the track gets particularly busy on a Sunday Kevin may make the call to split the kids group in two to allow the autos and 65s to properly enjoy the track.

As previously mentioned the Milk Run is situated right next to the Arena Essex, this means that the paddock is fairly exposed albeit you get to enjoy the hard standing ground. The track itself is nestled in the woods making it feel fairly scenic.

The team have been clever with their layout and utilised as much of the land as possible and so the track features long, sweeping bends as well as big hairpins. The layout flows and the varied array of obstacles make for a fun, albeit fairly short lap.

The soil at the Milk Run is a peculiar mix. The top end features a sandy soil where as the bottom end is a nice fluffy hardpack – not blue groove but not loam or sand either. When prepared to perfection – as it was on our visit – this soil provides grip for days and cuts up very nicely with some nice berms and ruts forming quickly.

Despite featuring some fairly long straights the track doesn't feel too fast. Obstacles such as stall walls, ski jumps and a very manageable rhythm/whoop section slow the track down and help add to the overall flow of the circuit. One negative is that the track isn't all that wide in places and

I can imagine that it gets a little crowded on a busy weekend.

In terms of difficulty and suitability I think that after the Milk Run team dialled back their new layout the track is friendly and suitable for absolutely anyone. There are no obstacles too scary, yet there's enough to challenge the fast boys. With creative thinking the experts and pros can have some fun – there's one huge leap dubbed Kilimanjaro which spans two smaller table top jumps. Similarly the faster guys can mix up the rhythm through the whoops.

The track is graded, watered and taken care of to an almost OCD standard, which is great to see.

The Milk Run has a decent array of facilities, with a proper toilet block, spares van, medical unit and the biggest burger van I've ever seen.

Marshalls and medics are always in attendance to keep you safe and healthy.

I had a great day ripping around the Milk Run – it's fun, flowy and friendly. A great day at the track!

CONCLUSION

Difficulty – if I can manage it, anyone can!

Fun factor – I'm still smiling!

Facilities – that burger van though...

Overall DBR score – TOWIEastic!

TRACK ATTACK!



ESSENTIAL INFO!

THE MILK RUN

Location: Thurrock, Essex RM19 1AE

Length: 1200 metres

Prices: Kids £25 Adults £30

Contact: 07881301731

Surface: Soil/sand mix

Shop: Spares van

Catering: Yes

Kids track: Beginners' circle

Coaching: Gary Linge uses the track

Toilets/wash block: Hard standing toilet block

Opening times: Sat/Sun 10-4, Weds 12:30-6:30

Difficulty: Low/medium

Enjoyment Factor: High

Suitability: Everyone

Session length: 15 minutes

Groups: Four – Novice, Inters, Expert, Kids

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DAN DARES!

TO TRY ENDURO WITH THE HELP OF A LITTLE LONG-TERM TEST-BIKE LOVE FROM KTM...

Words by **Dan Grove** Photos by **Matt Dean**

So, this is a little bit different for me and it's certainly going to be a fun winter with a little project in the shape of this KTM EXC-F 350. I've ridden a few local enduros over the years on a motocross spec bike – as that's all I had – so I kinda knew what I was getting into plus I had a full set of the all new Fox Legion enduro line that I was looking forward to trying out in the environment that it was intended for.

So everything just kind of fell into place nicely as I was really keen to keep riding after missing a chunk of the summer with a back injury. So with a morning off work I returned the trusty RM-Z250 and collected this enduro weapon on my way home. Proving that I'm on a lucky roll at the moment I also have somewhere ideal to ride it that includes everything found in enduros – including grassy banks, steep climbs, a stream and plenty of trees.

I've ridden motocross there on and off for a little while however I avoided the streams – and trees although there have been a few close calls. However, this place is made for enduro. I'll call it 'Ziggy's' as that's my mates name and the land is on his parents' farm. Ziggy's Dad used to ride this piece of land back in the '80s/'90s which is pretty cool. I'll try and get a GoPro lap of it when I get a GoPro (wow, that was subtle – Sutty)...

So I ran the bike in nice and steady for an hour over there then changed the oil, oil filter and fuel filter as the manual – and the mechanic at KTM HQ when I picked the bike up – states. The manual says that you need to use specific tools for reinstalling the oil screen and removing the oil filter but this isn't the case.

For reinstalling the oil screen look inside the hole to see what it sits on, apply some engine oil to the o-ring on the end that you're inserting first and then guide it in carefully. You'll feel it meet where it is to slide on to and with a little push it'll be located correctly. Then you just need to install the plug that the other end of the screen fits into.

With the oil filter you can just place normal wide pliers in the recess of the filter and with one hand on each of the handles, open them up with a gentle twist and it'll come out easily. I took the mechanic's advice of submerging the oil filter in oil and then installing it followed by refilling it with 1050ml of Motorex 10W/60 Fully Synthetic motor oil instead of what the manual states which is to lean the bike on it's right side and then fill the oil filter housing 1/3 full with oil before installing the new filter. The procedure in the manual is obviously a lot more work with taking the bike off the stand then estimating a third which will vary slightly depending on what you lean the bike on.

Changing the fuel filter was a doddle as well as there is a connector on the fuel line that you twist and it separates. You then carefully remove the

filter and install the new one, reconnect the fuel line and that's it. This all may sound pretty basic but I'm just going through what I've done with the bike.

I went to Ziggy's the following weekend to get some decent time in on the bike as by this time I'd already entered an enduro! So I rode 40 minutes twice followed by a 30 minute session to finish the day. I went three clicks harder on the compression on the forks after the first ride and all the adjustment on the forks is done on the top of the fork legs. One leg handles the compression while the other leg takes care of the rebound so you can easily adjust the forks while stopped on a ride without the need for tools if your route or race is getting rougher.

The manual is really handy in the fact that it provides recommended settings for the suspension and gives you a table of rider weights and the spring rates that you'll need. Luckily for me I fall into the spring rates that the bike comes with as standard so that's one thing that I don't need to have adjusted and it was quite obvious when I rode the bike.

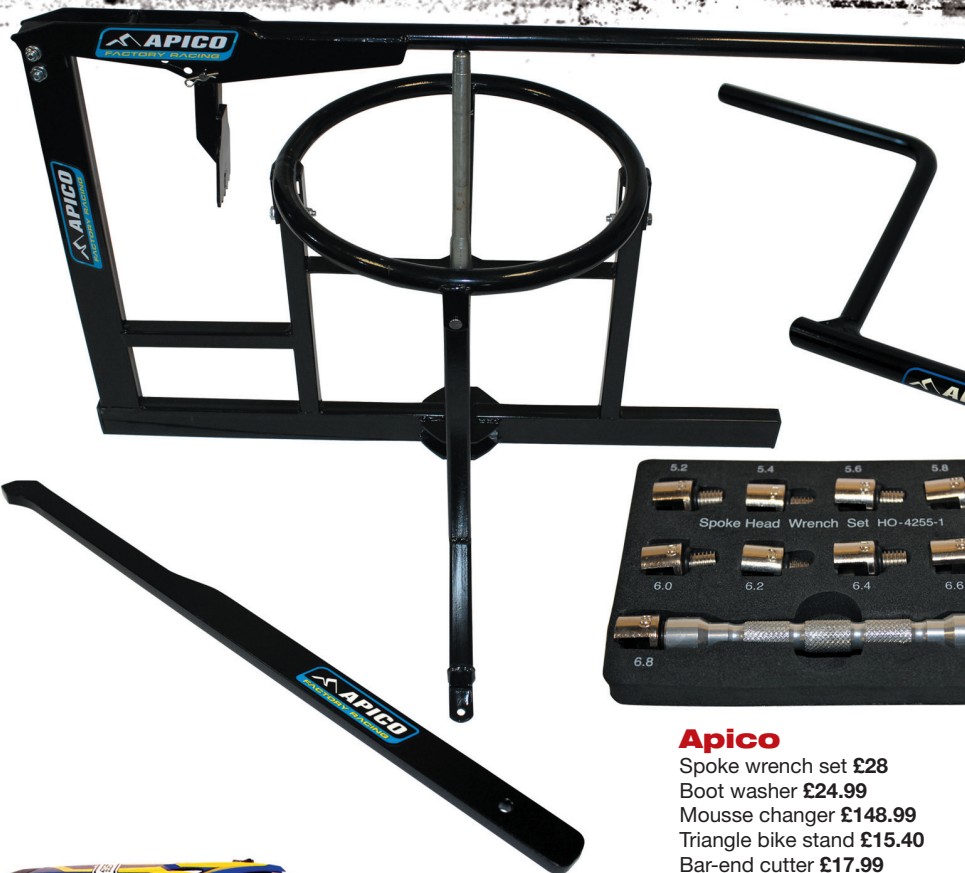
I quite liked the softer nature of the enduro-spec suspension however if I was to ride some big motocross jumps or come across some really big drop offs then I'd definitely have to go in a lot of clicks front and rear. The manual includes suggestions on where to put the suspension clickers listed as 'comfort', 'standard' and 'sport' which I think is a really handy starting point for anyone new to this bike whether it's brand-new or a second-hand purchase.

I set the sag at 110mm and the suspension has remained unchanged besides the three clicks on the compression on the forks. The shock settings are in the 'standard' settings. I've not even moved the handlebars as they're exactly where I'd put them although I did move the levers up ever so slightly and brought the rear brake pedal up too.

I really like the look of the stock colour and graphic scheme, the orange and black combo looks mean compared to previous models with white plastic which I'm sure got scratched and then had dirt ingrained into it making the bike look a little 'used'. For the graphics I hit up Only ESP who did a stellar job of loosely copying the stock KTM design which is what I asked for and I think it's fair to say that they nailed it!

If you look closely you'll see how well they have colour matched the KTM orange so it's fair to say that I look like that dude with all the gear and no idea as I turned up for my first race with a new bike and gear. Especially as I arrived late thanks to a road closure on a road that wasn't closed but I diverted around it anyway and then having to run across a stubble field fully geared up to catch the closing moments of the riders' meeting.

I'll let you know how the race went next month...



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Rob Hooper (Husky) rode a rookie season of 500GPs with Doug Wheeler's support in 1975

Doug

MOTORCYCLE SPORT HAS LONG BEEN DEPENDENT ON THE PATRONAGE OF PASSIONATE ENTREPRENEURS, ENTHUSIASTS AND DEALERS TO FINANCE AND SUPPORT TEAMS AND RIDERS. THE SUDDEN PASSING IN NOVEMBER OF OXFORDSHIRE DEALER DOUG WHEELER, AT THE AGE OF 82, ROBBED US OF A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE SEVENTIES' SCENE AND BY A CRUEL IRONY, IT COINCIDED WITH A TYPICALLY INFECTIOUS PICTURE ON THESE VERY PAGES OF DOUG SHARING A JOYOUS MOMENT WITH HIS RIDERS ROB HOOPER AND VAUGHAN SEMMENS IN 1979...

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

Doug Wheeler Motorcycles was based in his home village of Garsington, south of Oxford after he returned after doing national service in the army. He'd started riding in 1950, aged 14, and was already winning trials trophies at 18 while stationed in Germany. He met Jean in the late fifties (when Dougie was campaigning a DMW!). They married in 1960, celebrating their 56th anniversary this year.

Doug raced all manner of machinery, moving on to pre-65s in his later years and despite falling off a ladder last January – and spending two weeks in hospital – still worked every day in his garage. “He would repair anything that needed fixing,” says Jean. “Tractors and mowers as well as cars and bikes. But he stopped doing MOTs this year. He wasn't too keen on them computers!”

Wheeler entered the national arena as a sponsor in 1971 with effervescent Midlander and current HRC grand prix manager Roger Harvey, who was contesting the Shell Under-21

national championship. “Doug was a Husky dealer very early on and I was basically a customer at the shop buying Husky parts,” recalls Harvey. “But AJS were pushing him to promote their Stormer. So I changed bike for the last two rounds and won the title on a Doug Wheeler AJS!” But Roger quickly tired of the AJS. “The 370 was terrible,” he grimaces. “It used to vibrate and break frames. Badger Goss (Maico importer) said to me ‘you do well to see when you're riding on one of them, boy!’ So we chopped back to Husky in 1972.”

By then Harvey had been joined in the Wheeler team by a younger starlet from the same Staffordshire town of Rugeley. “Doug wanted a second rider and I got put in the frame,” says Rob Hooper. “He took my old Husky and gave me two AJS's.” Duly armed, the spectacular Hooper won the last ever Shell Under-21 series in 1973. “For the first few months the AJS didn't seem like the best solution!” says Rob diplomatically. “Then the factory loaned me one of Vic Eastwood's factory engines for the sidecar GP support

races at Newbury but Vic wouldn't let me ride it! ‘Sod 'em’, said Doug, ‘we'll use my 250 Bultaco’. He was very easy going, but you could push him too far!” So Rob rode his AJS in the last Shell round at Tisbury then, crowned champion, rejoined Harvey on a Husky, a distinctive pairing in the novel orange and maroon colours of Doug Wheeler Racing.

For 1974 Harvey moved on to a Doug Wheeler Yamaha, with help from Brian Leask at his Yamoto importership. “That was when I did my first 250GPs,” says Roger. “Me and Splink went off to Sabadell with Vic Allan for the first round. Dougie paid me a few hundred quid and I did four or five rounds.” He ran at the front of the Portsmouth club's British GP before crashing out. “Occasionally Dougie came. We went to Czecho together. On the ferry he bought a box of his favourite Henry Winterman cigars. We drove all the way to Holiche, loded it up in a hotel and raced the GP. ‘I gotta get some cigars, boy’. ‘What about the ones you bought on the ferry?’ ‘Them gone boy!’ In four days!” Back home Roger won his >>



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first 125 national at Halstead and finished third in the series. "But I didn't want to ride the 360 again in 1975. It was a weapon!" So it was back to Husqvarna, except for a one-off ride in the British 125GP in Pembrokeshire. "A schoolboy had brought a 125 Yam into the shop as part-exchange. Doug said 'why don't you take that to Saundersfoot?' I finished fifth overall and started thinking about 125GPs..."

1975 was also the first year of the all-in-one British Open championship. Both Harvey and Hooper did the Hawkstone 500GP, Rob riding a full rookie grand prix season that year. "I'd got on to the ACU grading list on the 360 Husky," grins Robert. "It suited me because it was a revvy bike!" Up until now both Roger and Robert had 'real' jobs, Harvey an apprentice fitter at Rugeley power station and Hooper driving Ford Escort estate cars with their mate Splink. Then Rob started an engineering apprenticeship at BSA, but they closed down after six months. "I transferred to Finnings, but had no interest at all in bulldozers and couldn't face it!" So he hit the grand prix trail. "Doug supplied bikes and parts – everything

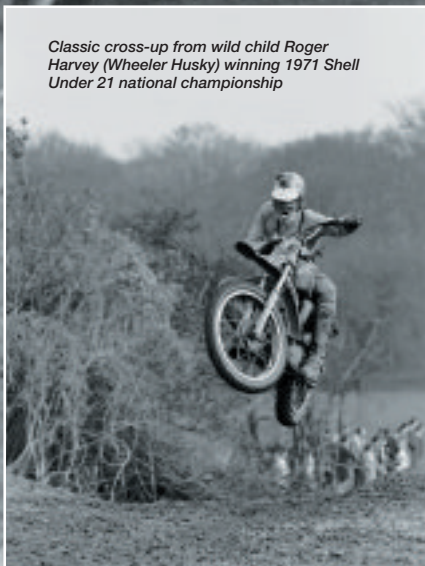
we needed to race with – and our finance came from start and prize money. Just me and my Dad at first. Then Doug and Jean came to the German round in Beilstein, where I scored my first point (only awarded to tenth place then). Doug liked the after show party as much as the event, up in the town hall with his cigar and whisky mac!"

1976 saw Harvey pursue his 125 grand prix dreams, often travelling entirely alone as rider, spannerman, dishwasher and cook! "Doug was always for you bettering yourself," remarks Roger appreciatively. "We went to the Husqvarna factory, which meant visiting the lawnmower department because the man in there was the best guy to get your 125 going. Doug gave me some help – mainly bikes and parts – then off you go and earn what you can. With good start money and prize money at GPs, plus prize money nationally and at French internationals, I could make a living." He needed to. He and Lyn got married that year – and honeymooned the next day racing round a slag heap near Chesterfield! "I also had different deals and bonus money. For example every

picture I had in the papers I got £25, hence those cross-ups that annoyed you so much Jack!" Harvey finished a sensational fifth overall in the 125 world championship, first privateer behind four factory bikes. "The bike was slow but it never broke," he says. Then, turning down the offer of a factory Maico, Roger remained faithful to Husqvarna but left Dougie's side for direct support from importer Brian Leask. And in 1977 the 125 Husky did nothing else but break...

Hooper also enjoyed one of his best seasons in 1976. "The 1975 Husky was terrible so Dougie loaned me a Maico out of the shop at the end of the year. It was solid, stable and went where you pointed it. So I was associated with Badger through Doug." The Maico suited Hoop's lean, loose riding style to perfection. The opening round of the British Open championship at Nantwich saw a terrific tussle with Graham Noyce, also on a Maico. "I was walking away with the first moto when she seized, but it just felt right. I did have a habit of revving a bike!" He won two out of three races at the Tweseldown television meeting, finished >>

Classic cross-up from wild child Roger Harvey (Wheeler Husky) winning 1971 Shell Under 21 national championship



Roger Harvey and his Husky competed in several 1974 250GPs with Doug Wheeler's support



Wheeler twins Harvey (Husqvarna) and Hooper (AJS) tussle at Corsham in 1973



Immaculate 58 year-old Doug Wheeler in action at 1992 Farleigh Castle Classic GP

DODGY DOUG? MOTs passed, no questions asked . . .

Our British Eurosport producer and world superbike roving reporter Charlie Hiscott is an Oxfordshireman who knew Doug Wheeler Motorcycles well. As a young local road racer and reprobate Charlie would use Dougie's MOT services in the late 1990s. "He had a beautiful old-school workshop," enthuses Charlie. "Greasy old medals and magazines everywhere and old photos on the wall. I once rode my race bike up there. Doug wasn't worried about the loud exhaust. 'You got an end can and lights at home, boy?'. Oh yeah, of course Doug... I'd take my FZ750 there when I was 17 – bald tyres and no brakes. We'd chat over a cup of tea and I'd get my MOT no matter what condition the bike was in. The things I used to get up to on that bike, I'm amazed I'm still here." Charlie chuckles. "I should be religious because someone was looking after me and it wasn't Dougie Wheeler, that's for sure!"



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Typically cheery Doug Wheeler in his superb 70s team colours alongside Terry Challinor at 1992 Farleigh Castle Classic GP



Rocket Rob Hooper (Wheeler AJS) skips to 1973 Shell Under-21 national title

sixth in the British Open series and scored decent results in 250 grands prix. "We travelled down to Spain for the first round with Doug and Jean but we were completely lost with Spanish," laughs Robert. "Sick of rare steaks Doug took out his cigar lighter and set alight his serviette to show the waiter he wanted it well done. The steak came back as rare as ever but Jean's chicken was as black as charcoal!"

Rob remembers regular trips down to Doug's shop. "He always treated me very well. You'd race every weekend, sometimes at his local Oxford Ixion meetings in Bletchington. He never had any expectations, always felt you were doing your best and accepted that. No pressure ever to do any more than your best. And I can't remember any seriously angry moments with Doug. He always had a smile on his face. Every year we'd go with him in his Jag to the motorcycle show in London and end up in Soho, Dougie the ringleader. Fantastic days." Hooper also left Wheeler at the end of 1976. He regrets it still! "The lure of a factory deal with Husqvarna," Rob smiles ruefully. "I would've been better off with third pickings from Maico

behind Noyce and Neil Hudson at Doug's than first pickings with Husky!"

A final footnote came three years later, when Vaughan Semmens was embarking on his stellar 1979 season on a Wheeler Maico. "We all went down to Sabadell for the first 250GP in Doug's van," remembers Rob. "Doug, Jean, Vaughan, me and me Dad. That relationship was still there even though I was no longer riding for him..." I also enjoyed the Wheelers' hospitality on a 250GP road trip to Beuerne, in Germany, when I slept across the front seats of the Transit, my feet sticking out through an open window. Unfortunately overnight rain meant a very soggy awakening. Jean still chuckles at the memory!

Semmens, another dashing Midlander, had taken over the Wheeler Maico reigns in 1977 and they enjoyed three increasingly successful seasons together, topped off with a fabulous fourth place in the 1979 British Open championship and 12th in 250GPs, top privateer again. After Vaughan's unlucky accident early in 1980 Doug reverted to backing local riders like hard man Michael Watts, whose

dad Ken was Oxford's Evel Knievel, attempting stunts like jumping the River Thames on a Bultaco! And those Wheeler colours continued to fly in Dougie's pre-65 outings. I saw him racing at the Farleigh Castle classic grand prix in 1992 and they recently featured back on track in 2016. "I still had two original Doug Wheeler shirts," says Hooper. "I gave one to Craig Elwell for his collection – he was chuffed to bits – and wore the other one at the Hawkstone legends meeting."

One of Roger Harvey's favourite Wheeler tales also post-dates his happy times with Doug. "I debuted a 250 Suzuki at Hawkstone Park on New Year's Day 1978. Neil Griffiths was on a 370 he kept hurling round the outside over the Girling Leap trying to pass me into the chicane. I got pissed off and put him in the fence. All I heard was the sound of breaking wood as the Commander crashed. Apparently Doug, signalling Vaughan half-way up the hill, had said 'one of these boys is gonna suffer and my money's on Roger!'"

RIP Doug Wheeler. You may be gone but the stories will remain...

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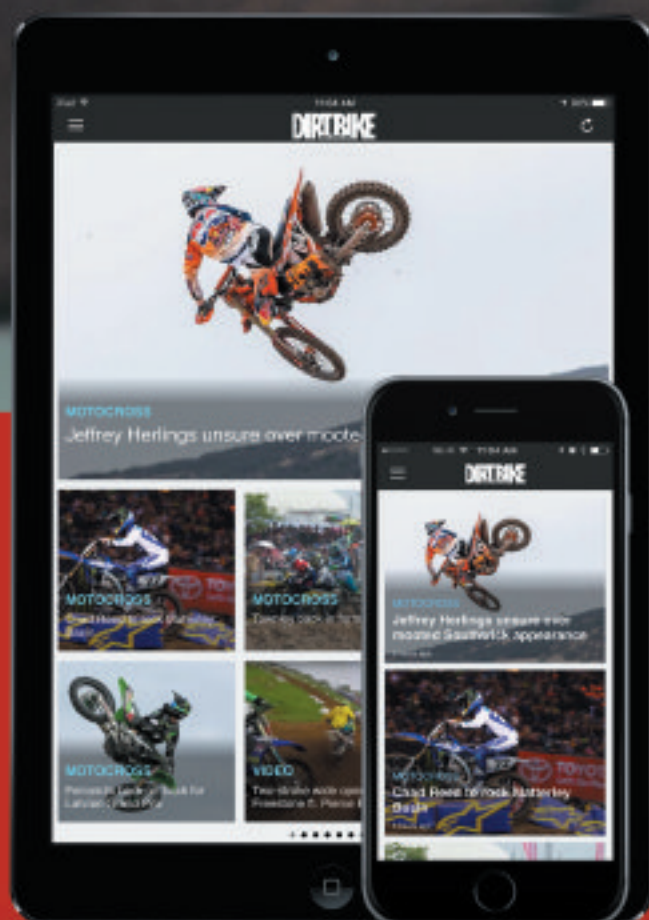


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NICE ONE

**RIPPIN' RYAN HOUGHTON WRECKS, RIDES N' RATES
KIMI RAIKKONEN'S FACTORY FO-FIDDIES PLUS
MAX ANSTIE'S MX2 MACHINE...**

Words by **Ryan Houghton** Photos by **Bavo Swijgers**

Here's a little tip for the next time the missus says you're allowed a day out with the boys – get yourself over to Lommel and have a blast on the best motocross bikes money can't buy. Well that's how old Editor Suttie sold me the latest test over the blower. Boom, I was off like a shot.

Lommel may have many millions of laps put into it every year by pros, experts and amateurs alike but it is still the place to go if you wanna put some good testing miles into yourself and your bike. Therefore when testing factory machinery for you good folks at home I couldn't think of a better place to be and – come to think of it – by the end of the day I felt as though there weren't many better crossers around to ply your trade on. Yeah baby...it's the Factory Husqvarnas.

I kicked off on one of the best looking and most potent bikes in GP motocross – Max Nagl's FC450. What a motor! Jeez that thing is fast. The power of the Austro-Swedish-Italian stallion marque is unreal – a bit like that country I just made up.

The Rockstar Energy team really have done some work on the engine over last winter and the course of this season because the bike is an absolute rocket. Of course it helps if it's in the right hands.

Now I fully understand why the tiddly German gets so many holeshots – couple the brute horsepower of the Husky with the fact that Nagl weighs little more than my lunchbox and you have a recipe for success.

Of course I had to try a few practise starts, especially with the launch control system in full swing. Even in deep sand >>

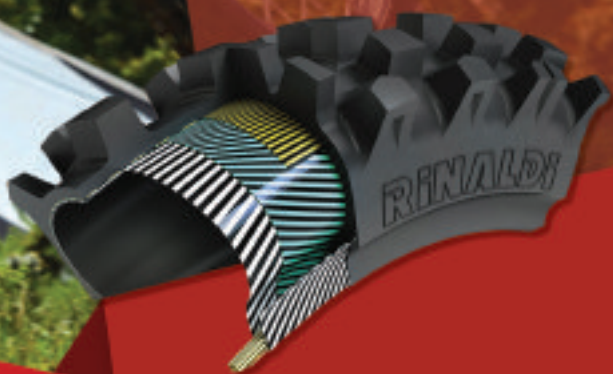


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Max Nagl's Factory FC450 gets a
Ryan Houghton riding and rating!



I had to keep my weight right over the front along the complete start straight because the bloody thing just wanted to wheelie the whole way. I was just thinking to myself as I tried a few more starts, I would have two hopes of beating Nagl off the line in a GP – Bob Hope and no hope!

Joking aside the bike has all the attributes of being a frontline GP machine and Nagl has a wonderful starting technique so really it's no wonder that the #12 is always there or thereabouts off the start of any race he enters. Having said all that there is no doubting the strength of the German either because you have to be a tough son of a gun to hang on to the monstrous 450 for 35 minutes in sand.

Ergonomically – and I think I said the same thing last year – if you are more than six feet tall then in my opinion this bike is extremely hard to ride. The bars are super low and he has his levers really high. They are easily above level so even grabbing the clutch felt really awkward. I didn't even use the front brake as we tested them in the deepest sand world >>



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motocross has to offer.

The bike sits lower to the ground than standard as Max Nagl is a pretty small guy so this bike really is customised to his unique needs. The WP suspension was pretty good as you would expect but I found myself riding in a weird style. As I was standing up I found my arms stretching really far away as the bike and handlebars sit so low. But I ain't gonna argue with a bloke who has won nine GPs in his career.

Max Nagl's team-mate for 2016 was Frenchman Christophe Charlier and much like Charlier didn't light up the MXGP division this year I wasn't overly impressed with his bike set-up either. The power of the former European 250 champ's bike is much the same a Nagl's FC450 but Charlier tends to like his power has a little more middle to top compared to the very low-end torquey grunt of the German.

The cockpit set-up is pretty standard with both handlebars and >>



Charlier's 450 is a little revvier than Nagl's grunty beast



The Factory 450 is a stunning piece of kit...





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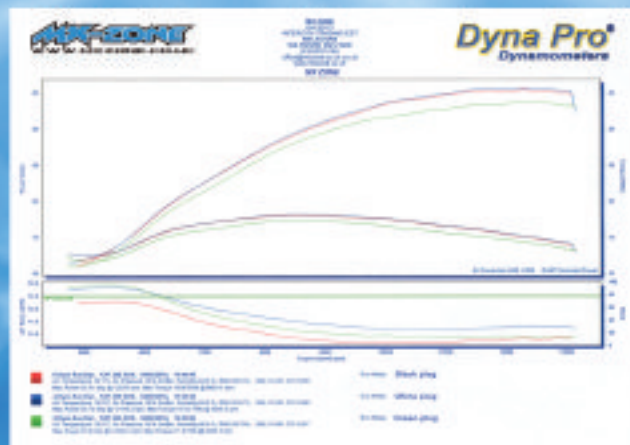
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levers set in a very neutral position. Contrary to Max Nagl's bike I'd say all shapes and sizes would get on okay with this type of set-up. So far so good but it's when you give the suspension a good work out that I found some flaws in Charlier's preferences.

I found his bike was one of the stiffest bikes I have ever come across. The rear shock is over responsive and you can literally feel every bump. For example coming into fast corners with little stutter bumps you feel the rear touch every lump in the road. The big Husky doesn't really get majorly out of shape but every jolt lets you know they are there when you should be concentrating on where you're going.

I genuinely wasn't a fan of bike, the suspension was far too nervous for me especially when compared to Nagl's bike. As you enter a high speed corner his bike bobbles initially on the first bump which completely unsettles you for the rest of the corner. As a consequence I found myself fighting the bike and using unnecessary energy.

The test allowed me to see how a Husky would perform with the suspension set so differently – in this case with Nagl's bike where a plush front fork meant I was able to attack the bumps a lot harder and was using half the energy. I guarantee this just feeds you with confidence to keep on pushing your boundaries further and further.

Finally I was let loose on Max Anstie's Grand Prix winning Rockstar FC250 and again it's a pure burst of rocket power. Honestly it felt just like I was riding Jeffrey Herlings' bike. The lifelong rivals' machines are set-up very much the same with engine power and suspension. I do feel as though >>

Max Anstie's 250 packs a similar amount of power to the world champion's KTM

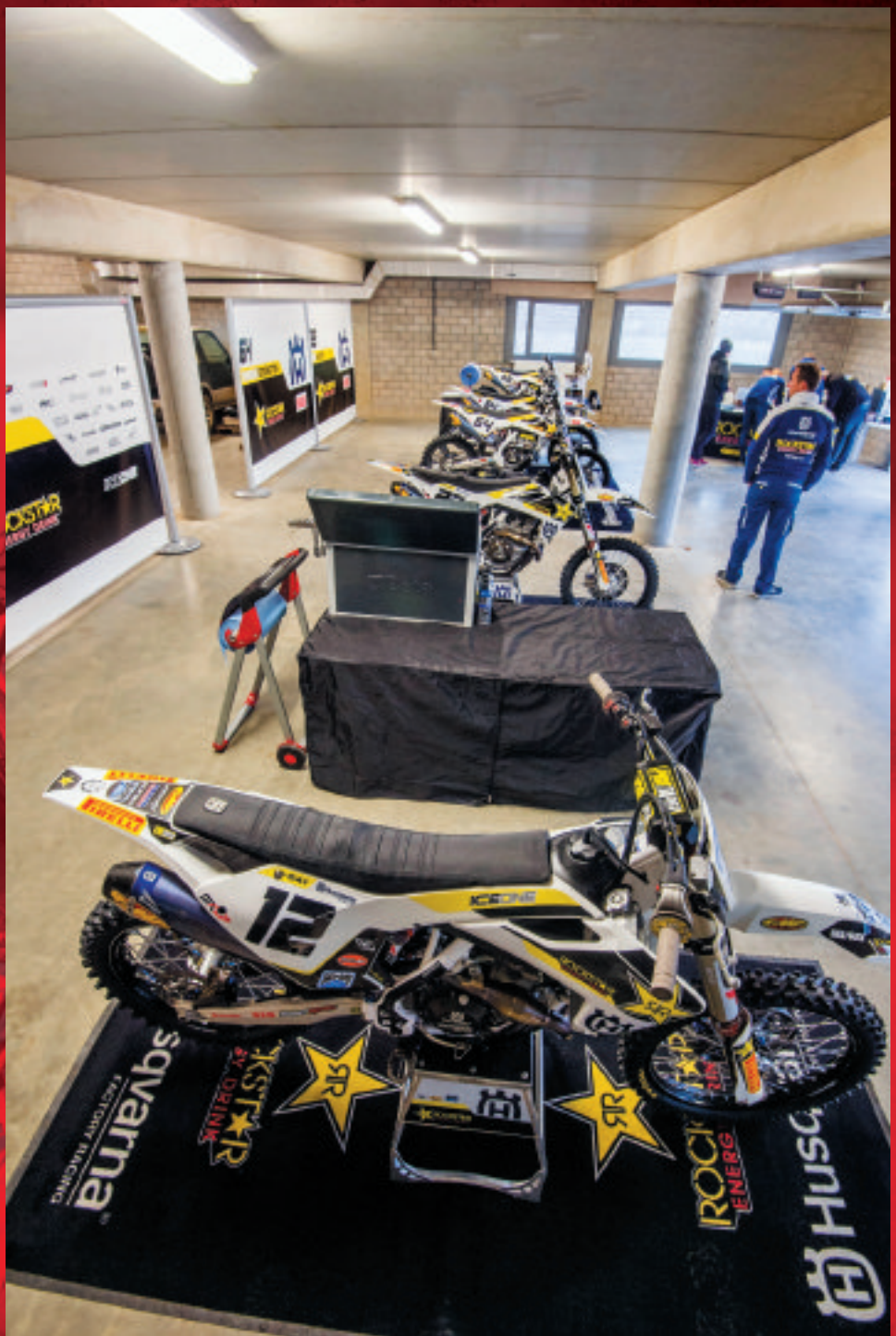


With plenty of power and sweet handling it's abundantly clear why this bike is a race winner in the right hands





Max Nagl's machine is the standout star of the factory fleet!



Herlings has his power all at the top-end while our British hero uses a little more of the middle rev-range to propel him to glory.

For example, in tighter corners you could run a gear higher and use the torque of the Husqvarna rather than the high RPM style of Jeffrey's KTM.

The Huskies do have a very distinctive noise and they do produce a booming soundtrack. I was speaking to Joel the head mechanic and he claimed it's only down to the FMF pipe they use and the ECU settings they programme in. I did a little sneaking around and looking at those FMF pipes they don't look like the gear you can buy off the shelf... Detective Houghton is pretty sure the FMF pipes are modified to suit their bikes but they weren't likely to reveal all their secrets to little old me.

As most people know at Lommel there are loads of single jumps to flat and some of these can hand out some harsh old landings. On my own bike when I am practising out there I find I get almighty thumps when I have to go long but with the factory WP kit on Max's 250 the landing is just cushioned beautifully. The bike lands and is so settled you go directly forwards. This does give you tons of confidence and you can see why Anstie piles on the coals even though he might look sketchy at times on TV.

To sum things up I have got to say that the IceOne Rockstar Energy team is unbelievably professional. Just being around the mechanics for a day showed how organised and clean it is possible to be even in an industry like motocross. Very impressive...



The Bullet's Bullet!

**RYAN HOUGHTON RIDES AND RATES
JEFFREY HERLINGS' MX2 MISSILE TO FIGURE
OUT JUST HOW MUCH OF A WEAPON THE
WORLD CHAMPION'S 250 SX-F REALLY IS..**

Words by **Ryan Houghton** Photos by Juan Pablo Acevedo

This test is the big one – the bike that everyone wants to ride. May I present to you the World Champion's booming 250F and man I'm well keen to get down and dirty to see what this beauty can do.

I'm lucky enough to have ridden a few pukka bikes in the last couple of years but a KTM 250 set up for Jeffrey Herlings still has that extra bit of intrigue. During the season we all wonder at how the flying Dutchman rides this beast so hard while watching the gogglebox or live in person but now I'm sat astride the mean orange machine about to find out for real. Jeez, I better not fudge this up.

I am going to start with the power because that's what the Austrian marque is renowned for. I felt as though I was

riding a two-stroke because all the power is at the top end. You can't just wind the power on – you have to go down the gearbox and hit the power really hard. And you can just rev and rev and rev this bike.

I've always watched him ride and it seems like he is extremely heavy on the bike. But his machine is designed in a way to withstand it. The KTM boys have built a bike that can be raced as hard as anything on the planet and still come back in one piece which is as much a testament to their skills as much as the rider.

I have just ridden the factory Yamaha 250s and it is immediately apparent that the KTM is still on another level power wise to the rest! You do have to go up and down the gearbox a lot to keep the bike singing at maximum power but that sort suits my riding style so I was happy as a pig in she*t really. >>





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DBR test pilot Ryan Houghton rode Herlings' MX2 missile hard and came away with a huge smile on his face



The Bullet's Bullet



Ryan rates the champ's cockpit

Strangely, the Dutchman uses the levers off the standard 2012 KTM because he finds them more comfy but who am I to argue? I tested the KTM last year and I think Jeffrey has his levers set a lot lower this time around. He also has a different clutch cylinder which he says is more responsive off the start than the standard version.

His bars are in a neutral place which is quite refreshing as most factory bikes I've ridden they have had the bars really low and they isn't no good for those of us with arms like a young gorilla

The factory Bemba brakes are a little more progressive than standard. You are able to pull the lever pretty hard without the front locking up. Also with the progressiveness and lushness of the forks under heavy breaking you feel so much in control of the bike. Even on my own bike I would have felt myself thinking about not tucking the front but Herlings' bike gave me so much confidence, you just don't give it a second thought.

Suspension-wise Jeffrey has both the rear and front quite stiff on the top of the stroke but extremely plush through the rest of the stroke. I really couldn't say anything but positives about the WP equipment and to top it all riding with 52mm forks is so nice. They genuinely give you so much confidence and a better >>



feeling around the whole track.

I guess after all this time testing bikes made for the smaller guys in the GP paddock I finally got to ride a bike that was developed for a guy with a similar build to mine and you can really feel the difference. Jeffrey is clearly a confident and highly talented rider but this sort of machinery gives him the capability to even push himself to limits that other riders and other bikes just can't handle. The suspension was pretty much the best thing about the 2016 Factory 250SXF and little wonder really with all that power asking the front and rear to work their arses off.

As I said both front forks and rear shock are pretty stiff on the top of the stroke but this was so nice for the little stutter bumps coming out of corners, The bike just skips across them with ease which belies how heavy Jeffrey looks on

the bike cos let's be fair he's no Jean-Michel Bayle in the grace department.

I guarantee this ease of riding saves so much energy when you are racing because you don't have to fight the bike. I know it sounds silly but the rear end just follows the front and that means no nasty surprises when you're at full whack!

After the initial stiffness of the suspension it is extremely plush through the rest of the stroke. For example there was a fairly big tabletop at this track and it was wide open. It had a really sharp steep landing and the first time I tried jumping it I came up right on the knuckle and I was expecting the bike to react and throw me out of shape but I didn't even bounce.

I guess you get what you pay for and KTM are a no-expense-spared sort of outfit. In essence coming up short or even over jumping

a single is a lot nicer with this factory WP stuff. I can just about compare it to jumping on a pillow and that makes for a beautiful bike to ride. Add in the monstrous power that the KTM 250 produces and it's a serious weapon...

I wonder if I could borrow it for the British Champs? Please!

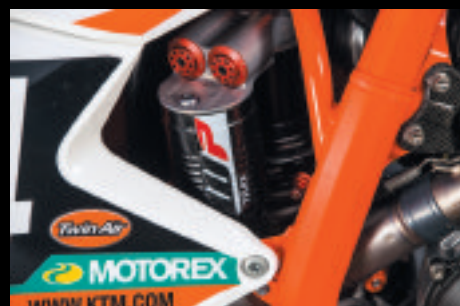
We were testing at a track called Lierneux in Belgium which was really rough and stony. So it was good to put his bike to the test on a track which is a little more similar to a race track.

Herlings was testing his new 450 on the same day and was looking super confident. I like a bit of a flutter so my early predictions are that we are going to have three consecutive rookie champions in the MXGP division...

Take my word for it, if his new 450SX-F is as good as the 250 KTM produce then next season should be a corker.



The Factory KTM motor packs plenty of ponies...







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RIDER: DOMINIC LANCETT

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SPOTLIGHT ON...

DOMINIC LANCETT #90

HOMETOWN: HEREFORD | DOB: 12/12/01 | SPONSORS: KJS RACING, DUAL SPORT MOTOR CYCLES, SIMON JONES AT TWS...

Standing at around five foot tall and weighing in at just seven stone, Dominic Lancett (Pirelli National Champion and third in the British Youth Nationals) was the lightweight battler with a heavyweight punch in the 2016 Big Wheel championships.

Just for the record – on his way to a crushing points win in the Pirelli series – Dom nailed 16 heat wins from 24 races run and in the BYNs the record read five moto wins together with two overall round victories coming at Milton Malsor and Pontrilas.

Having just turned 15 – he's one of the guys sticking with the 85cc machine – and he must start as one of the favourites in '17 for either of the big two titles that's the BYNs and MX Nationals. Coming up through the BSMA ranks, Dom's another who naturally excels on hardpack.

Rage tracked him down for a word...

Rage: Congratulations on 2016 it turned out to be a really good year for you, give me a brief rundown on all your career best results at National level.

DL: "I was BSMA Finals champion in 2012, '14, '15 and '16, BSMA Bridgestone National championship winner in 2014 and then of course Pirelli BVV champion this year and third in the BYNs."

Rage: Before looking ahead to 2017, did 2016 end on a bit of a disappointing note with you picking up injury at the Cusses Gorse BYN finale?

DL: "No, to be honest I'm more than happy with how this season has gone although having a small crash may have cost me second in the championship. If you're not on the top step does it

matter whether it's second or third? Then again if you had told me at round one (FatCat) I was going to end up third in the championship, I would have happily taken that."

Rage: In 2017 will the set-up with team and sponsors be much the same as it was in 2016? And where will you be concentrating your efforts?

DL: "Yes, hopefully the team will be the same as last year as the bikes and kit are all really good. As far as racing goes it's British Youth Nationals and MX Nationals next year plus the Pirelli Masters again. I especially enjoyed the Pirelli series, the tracks were all really well prepared and the meetings well run."

Rage: Looking at your 2016 results in particular, is it fair to say you prefer hardpack over sand? What are

ARE YOU **Judd** ENOUGH?

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your top five tracks and what was your favourite meeting of 2016?

DL: "Yeah, I do prefer hardpack as I grew up riding it but I still enjoy sand. My favourite five top tracks would be Hawkstone Park at five, then Cusseyes Gorse, Culham, Brompton number two and my top track is Pontillas. My favourite meeting of 2016 would have to be round four of the British Youth Nationals at Milton Malsor where I took the overall win – that was a great feeling."

Rage: On the training front are you working on any particular aspects to improve on?

DL: "I'm on the Rider Development Program with my trainer Justin Morris

and my plan over the winter is to get my shoulder back to full fitness then train with Justin whenever I can but mainly in sand. This will help me improve in that area and maximise my fitness."

Rage: It's your shout Team Lancett – is there anything you would like to say?

DL: "I'd like to mainly thank Kev Smith at KJS Racing for all the awesome help throughout the last year and team-mates James Smith and Aaron Colley for an amazing year. Paul Chambers at Dual Sport Motorcycles for keeping the bike on top form, Dain Traylor for being my race day mechanic, Justin Morris for all the great training and of course mum, dad, friends and family for supporting me."



NATIONALS EXPRESS!

With the MX Nationals line-up filled nice and fast we figured now's as good as ever to give you the lowdown on the showdown ahead...

Words by **Mike Gurney** Photo by **Jonty Dixon**.

For the second year running the MX Nationals have filled up very nicely and super quick too. So quick in fact that full rider lists were available early in November. While I'm not sure if that's any kind of record it does say just how popular the series has become.

In the 85s (split into two groups where the BWs easily outnumber the SWs) Charlie Heyman looks like the guy to beat in the Smallies section as he makes his MX National championship debut. His main nemesis of the last two years – that's super quick Alfie Jones – is also a section newbie.

In the BW division Eddie Jay Wade, Dominic Lancett and Kacey Hird are the obvious big hitters. That said, watch out for Lewis Wood, James Smith, James Hanscombe and Kyle McNicol – they are all capable of springing a surprise or two – along with the best of the new up grades like Ike Carter, Bobby Bruce and Louie Kessel. Following a terrific 2016 double reigning SW national champ Carter (MBO Power) will be keen to make an impact with bigger wheels as will Team Green's new recruit Bruce – he joins forces with Hird making up the Kawasaki dynamic duo.

The Talon MXY2 division is also split on engine capacity – but scored separately – and with an almost equal number of 125s and 250F runners this one looks perfectly balanced. Starting with the two-stroke brigade look no further than Rossi Beard, Ben Clark, Joel Rizzi, Sam Nunn and Josh Peters for the outright section favourites. Hard on their heels also keep a close eye on the likes of Preston Williams and Reece Martin just to name a couple. The section is full of potential and don't be too surprised if one of the above mentioned manages to get across the line first in front of the four bangers.

In the 250F class with Lewis Hall and Jed Etchells spearheading the Kawasaki effort – finish in front of this pair and you just might be champion. Having a look down the list at other potential heat winners, Jake Edey will be flat out chasing a championship gong, as will the calibre of Keenan Hird, Jake Curtis Stevens and Joe Cadwallader.

The full list of riders can be found here www.bit.ly/2gYuKSr

HOT DATES!

MX Nationals 2017

Round 1	March 4/5	TBA
Round 2	April 1/2	Preston Docks
Round 3	May 6/7	Lyng
Round 4	June 10/11	Hawkstone Park
Round 5	July 22/23	Canada Heights
Round 6	August 12/13	Foxhill



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FAMILY VALUES!

THE BOUGHEN FAMILY ARE ALL MAD FOR IT WHEN IT COMES TO MX...

With the 2017 Arenacross series just about to spring into life memories of the phenomenal battle for the 2016 65cc crown spring to mind. It was Kieran Boughen who ultimately triumphed and next up into the fray it's younger brother Ashton who carries all the family hopes. Both boys have recently been signed up by the RFX KTM Team and just as with last year there's an awful lot going on with the family Boughen.

Rage caught up with Mr Master Kids UK himself – dad Bradley...

Rage: Hi Brad, great news about the boys, how did the deal with RFX KTM come about and what are the boys thoughts?

BB: "It all started with a post on Facebook regarding RFX KTM taking on new team members for 2017. I sent them a CV with the boys' results from previous years and a week later I had a phone call from team manager James Dixon to say we had been put through to the short list.

"A month or so went by and I noticed on Facebook the 2017 team was announced with new signings Ashley Wilde and Patrick Gillian to join Joel Rizzi, Nathan Dixon and Henry Williams. I thought that was it and we never got through so I sent James a message to congratulate him on the new signings and to wish him good luck for 2017. James then replied with the fantastic news that the boys will also be part of this great team after himself and Paul Irwin had chosen them to represent the 65 and 85cc classes!

"The boys are really excited and can't wait to get started. It's going to be a great experience for them and all of us as a family. The boys have never been on a proper race team before and are really looking forward to getting their bikes under the RFX awning! It's a great team to be on, the boys have been

introduced to other brilliant new sponsors and they get to stay on the best brand bikes in my opinion – that's KTM."

Rage: How are things progressing with plans for HL Racing MX Master Kids and other events in 2017?

BB: "Once again we are back at Motoland, Mildenhall next year for Master Kids – we opened up bookings in November and straight away it went absolutely crazy. The 65 class is already full with 80 riders and 25 on the reserve list and the other classes are full or near enough full.

"There's also a new class for 125s – riders aged 13 -17 - which is proving very popular. The thinking at the moment is to run this class separate from our MX2 class as long as we have the numbers. Worst case scenario is – run together but scored separately.

"As an event we are still restricted on total numbers – our maximum is 400 riders again which means a lot of riders being left out which is disappointing – but that's all I can do. With so many restrictions on racing here in the UK it's going to be hard to build it any bigger!

"The French Master Kids runs with 700 riders but they are allowed to start at 7am and finish at 9pm while we're restricted to a 9am start and finish at 6pm. Given the same rules we could match the French numbers...

"That said, the 2017 UK Master Kids will still be the biggest youth weekend here in the UK. The feedback from previous years is that it runs and feels like a National but without all the stress has been great to hear from so many people and that's what it's all about for me.

"As for other events, we had a 65s and Auto weekend at East Tracks this year and once again

we are back there in '17. We had 200 riders aged six to 11 and I'm confident this will grow like the main Master Kids UK event – we could possibly see 250 to 300 riders at the 2017 gig!

"I was really disappointed I had to cancel this year's planned SX event after a lot of work had gone in. We had near full entries in most classes so it was a tough decision to cancel. Hopefully now the other events are established we may be able to pull it off in the near future."

Rage: Following all the fantastic drama of Kieran winning the Arenacross title last year can Ashton make it a Boughen family double? And after AX what of the boys' National plans?

BB: "I would love Ashton to have the same experience Kieran had by winning AX and hopefully he will do – after all we go racing to try and win at all meetings we do. Ashton's a completely different rider to Kieran though – he's wilder lets say! Kieran's holoshots and super smooth style won him the AX title but Ashton's not got a smooth bone in his body – balls out and hold tight sums up Ashton!

"Both boys are signed up with the British Youth Nationals and it's a rookie year for them both at this level so it's going to be a year with no set goals for either rider. Kieran is also in for the MX Nationals which we are really looking forward to – I have only heard great things about it as a series.

"Racing the same circuits as the Pros will be amazing – it's just a shame they don't do a 65 class as Ashton would love to be in the mix too. We'll also be entering some European events, gaining experience for following years. 2017 is going to be a busy year again for family Boughen – we can't wait to get started!"

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Photos by Nuno Laranjeira



For the past four years the Arenacross Tour has been building and building with important lessons learned along the way meaning that the fifth edition of the series – that kicks off in Manchester in the New Year – promises to be bigger, better, bolder and more brilliant than ever before.

Okay, so we say that pretty much each and every year but to be fair it's proved to be true each and every time with AX offering absolutely everyone from curious newbies to hardcore race fans an awesomely affordable night out for all the family.

Delivering an intense mix of high-flying freestyle action and the best indoor racing that Europe has to offer it's little wonder the AX series is a firm favourite with fans and is

growing in stature as a sporting event too.

The line-up for the 2017 Tour is so damn stacked that even Miss Arenacross feels threatened. With all three previous tour champions in the mix plus two outdoor national motocross champions and both current French SX Tour victors, that's already seven bona fide championship contenders without even mentioning the outsiders – and they ain't no slouches either.

Let's start off with reigning champ Thomas Ramette who'll be representing Geoff Walker's SR75 Suzuki squad for the third year on the bounce. AX champion in 2015 and '16, Ramette has also been crowned King of Poland, King of Stockholm and King of Supercross Yonne in 2016. Thomas was also runner-up in both the indoor and outdoor French SX Championships

– narrowly missing the titles in both. A consistently strong starter, this 25-year-old indoor specialist has mastered the AX series for two years on the trot now and has to be taken extremely seriously in 2017.

One man who'll be keen to take the #1 plate from his grasp is Cedric Soubeyras who came oh-so close to clinching the crown in 2016. Currently on top form – and perhaps more importantly using the same brand of equipment he has just won the French SX Tour on – Cedric enters the AX series with plenty to prove after last year's defeat/final round meltdown.

Not always the best starter, it's not uncommon to see Soubeyras having to battle through the pack where his aggressive passes make him one of the less popular riders on the tour with the other riders. However, the fans



Reigning AX champ Thomas Ramette leads the pack at round one in Manchester – can he do the same in 2017?

HOT DATES!

THE WHERE AND WHEN OF THE AX TOUR...

Round one	Manchester Arena, Manchester	January 7
Round two	SSE Hydro, Glasgow	January 14
Round three	Genting Arena, Birmingham	January 21
Round four	SSE Arena, Belfast	January 27
Round five	SSE Arena, Belfast	January 28
Round six	Sheffield Arena, Sheffield	February 11
Round seven	SSE Arena, Wembley	February 18

love to see a little rubbing and whether it's hard charges, harder passes, post-race fisticuffs or an all-out on-track tantrum you wanna witness, then the #120 is one to keep an eye on. Some might say he's well worth the price of admission alone and we couldn't really disagree!

2015 AX champ Fabien Izoird has seemed to lack a little pace compared to his two aforementioned countrymen in 2016 but a rider so experienced and so classy can't ever be counted out – especially not in a series he's previously dominated. Lining up for Buildbase Honda alongside Matt Bayliss – more about him later – you know his equipment is gonna be on-point

The third former AX champ in the line-up is of course inaugural victor Adam Chatfield who proved he's still got winning pace by acing the

final round in London's Wembley Arena last year. Heading the all-new Fro Systems PAR Elite squad into battle the #407 is not only blazingly fast but also has the ability to keep his head under pressure which is a real asset in the pressure-cooker environment of Arenacross

Florent Richier is the current French SX Tour SX2 champion and lines up for new kids on the block – Keystone Honda. While there's no doubting Flo's authenticity as an AX expert, his ability to jump brands and up to a 450 could be questionable and he seemed to struggle through the 2016 Tour after making a similar move albeit from blue to green machinery that time around.

Two riders not having to stress about lining up on something out of the norm are SR75 Suzuki's Cyrille Coulon and Team RFX Powered

by St Blazey hired gun Angelo Pellegrini. Both have been using RM-Z450s all year with great effect and both will be powered by similar machinery in the 2017 AX Tour.

After announcing his retirement from the sport at the end of 2015, the '16 Tour should have been Coulon's swansong but having enjoyed the UK's indoor series so much he kept on keeping on and as a result enjoyed some of his best results in years through the summer and into this winter. While I can't see the 34-year-old veteran making a run for the championship itself I wouldn't bet against him winning a main or more.

Pellegrini is also in that bracket. Amazingly quick and crazy stylish, the 29-year-old Italian is certain to win heats and quite probably a main event but the championship itself? Not likely, >>

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Hardcore bar-to-bar racing action is only around two-thirds of the show at Arenacross with the other 33.3 per cent of high octane goodness coming from the FMX boys. For the 2017 Tour the good people at ASLive have assembled eight of the illest freestyle riders the world has to offer including Edgar Torronteras, Petr Pilat, Nez Parker, Jamie Squibb, Steve Sommerfield, Arran Powley, Dan Whitby and Samson Eaton who are all ready to throw down for your viewing pleasure.

AX regular Jamie Squibb is just one of a few rostered riders who can pull insane tricks either way up...

DJ BBQ whips the AX fans into a frenzy!

Tommy Searle adds a certain amount of intrigue to the 2017 AX Tour

although I'm happy to be proved wrong... So that's the indoor specialists covered so who's next on the list? Hmmm...

When AX head honcho Matt Bates announced that Tommy Searle had signed up for the full Tour we were all blown away. And it has to be said he brings a whole lot of intrigue to proceedings and the big questions that need answering are can Tommy win races? And can Tommy win the championship?

There's no doubt he has the skillset to do both but being who he is means he carries a huge target on his back – I mean, who wouldn't wanna scalp a rider of that calibre if the opportunity arose. As a series newbie there are no old scores to be settled but on the flipside

there are riders in this series who only seem capable of racing by Braille. I think for Tommy to be successful he has to do what he did in the Maxxis all over again – take control of his own destiny by getting good starts and then riding smart races. He can do it.

Long standing Arenacross fans will no doubt remember what happened the last time a defending British MX Champ took on the indoor series, the year being 2014 and the rider – Kristian Whatley. Whatley well and truly showed his class in that year's series on the MBO Yamaha eventually ending the championship fifth after challenging for race wins all tour long. Unfortunately for Whatley that was the year of Izoid's total dominance and he never got

chance to return after that. Until now...

Having signed for the ever upbeat and totally proactive MVR-D Husqvarna squad K-What gets a second chance at AX glory in 2017 and I really don't know what to think about it as predicting what Whatley will do is about as easy as pushing custard up a hill with a fork. The guy's got serious bike skills and never gets too stressed about anything and those are two strong traits to have when it comes to Arenacross. I'm gonna put him in the Coulon category of potential race winner but unlikely championship candidate.

The MVR-D boys have a strong second rider too having secured the services of Adrien Escoffier for the series. The 22-year-old Frenchie >>>

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Close racing and crashes are common on the AX Tour



LITES BITES!

WHO TO WATCH OUT FOR IN THE 250F DIVISION...

Dominated by Joe Clayton and George Clarke in 2016, the Pro Lites division – for 250F riders aged 23 and under – has received an injection of hot new talent for 2017.

While Clayton is back to defend his crown and Clarke will be going all out to wrestle the number one plate from him, a hungry line-up of riders that includes Chris Bayliss, Dylan Woodcock and former youth supremos Ben Burridge, Harry Kimber and Ollie Osmaston has been assembled to spice things right up.

But perhaps the biggest threat to Clayton et al is French import Yannis Irsuti who'll be riding for JK Yamaha. Irsuti eventually finished second in the final series standing of the SX2 class in the French SX Tour so his indoor prowess should certainly not be underestimated.



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| #1 | Thomas Ramette | France |
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| #2 | Florent Richier | France |
| #31 | Alex Snow | UK |

BUILDBASE HONDA RACING

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|------|--------------|--------|
| #4 | Matt Bayliss | UK |
| #871 | Fabien Izoid | France |

JK YAMAHA

- | | | |
|-----|------------|-----------|
| #10 | Jay Wilson | Australia |
|-----|------------|-----------|

- | | | |
|------|--------------|-----|
| #476 | Collin Jurin | USA |
|------|--------------|-----|

FRO SYSTEMS PAR ELITE

- | | | |
|------|----------------|----|
| #33 | Ashley Greedy | UK |
| #407 | Adam Chatfield | UK |

TEAM GREEN KAWASAKI

- | | | |
|------|--------------|----|
| #100 | Tommy Searle | UK |
| #155 | Jack Brunell | UK |

MVR-D HUSQVARNA

- | | | |
|------|------------------|--------|
| #137 | Adrien Escoffier | France |
| #227 | Kristian Whatley | UK |

TEAM RFX POWERED BY ST BLAZEY

- | | | |
|------|-------------------|--------|
| #201 | Cedric Soubeyras | France |
| #941 | Angelo Pellegrini | Italy |

is awesomely fast but seems to be lacking that certain je ne sais quoi and struggles to nail down the big results. Maybe the 2017 AX Tour will be his breakthrough moment...

So that's 10 of the 16 confirmed athletes but who else is there? Well, let's start with the Tour's 2016 home-grown hero Matt Bayliss who after terrorising the field on a 250 in previous seasons is armed with a fire breathing Buildbase 450 Honda this time around. A real favourite with the fans the 23-year-old from Crowthorne in Berkshire brings a NFG attitude and is a real danger to win races from the off. Definitely a dark horse but don't be too surprised if he's somewhere in the top three at the end of it all.

Another Brit who could challenge for series

silverware is Team Green Kawasaki's Jack Brunell who came within a whisker of winning the inaugural tour and has been a contender ever since. Defined as a bit of an indoor specialist the 27-year-old from Windsor is fast but can be fairly inconsistent. However, with solid backing for 2017 this could be Jack's year to shine.

Arenacross rookie Alex Snow enters the fray in 2017 as a 28-year-old virgin (of the tour). Although a bit of an unknown, Snowy is one of the UK's most technically proficient riders, will be thoroughly prepared and could throw a real spanner in the works on his Keystone Honda.

Someone who's guaranteed to stir things up is 26-year-old lorry driver Ashley Greedy. Greedy's been a regular on the UK indoor

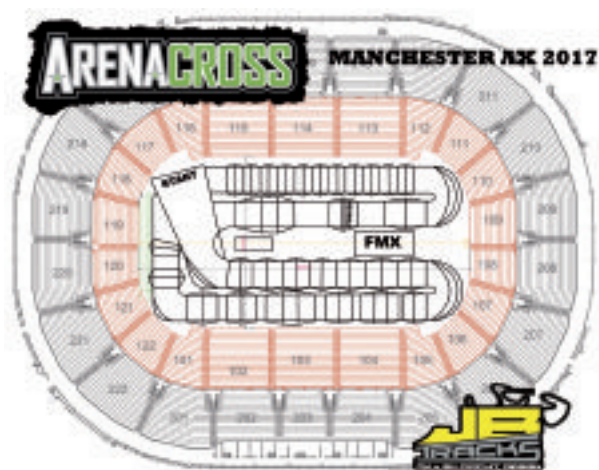
scene since his schoolboy days and absolutely adores playing it up for the fans. He's definitely guaranteed to create some action and after switching teams about a bazillion times throughout the 2016 series is looking forward to a little bit more consistency in 2017 as a full-time member of the Fro Systems PAR Elite team.

And of the currently confirmed riders and teams that just leaves JK Yamaha which is made up of Aussie ace Jay Wilson – an up n' comer whose first ever indoor race was the really recent Aus-X supercross where he ran inside the top 10 both nights – and American Badass Collin Jurin who certainly made his presence felt in the 2016 Tour before limping home early after wrecking his shoulder.



TRACK TALK!

**WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM
THE PROPOSED LAYOUTS...**



ROUND ONE - MANCHESTER ARENA

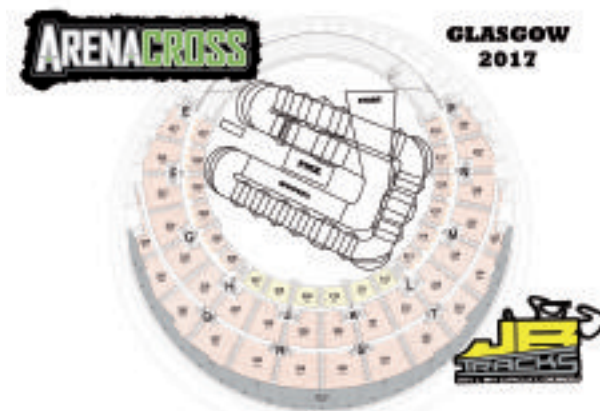
The Tour kicks off in Manchester's fairly unimaginatively named Manchester Arena and the action should come thick and fast from the very first drop of the gate.

What we can gather from the track map for round one – and remember these may change slightly so don't shoot us if what you see on the night is different – is that a short chute into a 90-degree left-hander will shoot the riders into a rhythm section. On paper this reminds us a little bit of Belfast in 2015 where there was absolute carnage in the LCQ as various lines came together in turn two.

This second corner is a 180-degree right which means it's gonna be Blockpass City – population still TBC. As riders go wide to line themselves up for the next straight, those behind will be gifted the perfect opportunity to make a move. We're less than a quarter of the way round this track and already there are two 'high excitement' areas to keep an eye on.

What looks like a step-on step-off combo is next before riders hit a huge triple and turn right before contending with a small double. They'll then try and line themselves up for the whoops section. Another 180-degree right offers a good passing opportunity – especially for those brave enough to peg it across the whoops – before a small roller sets riders up for the fairly large Finish Line double. A flat left hander completes the lap.

The soil in Manchester has been bang-on every year and this track should offer up a scorching night of racing. We can't wait!



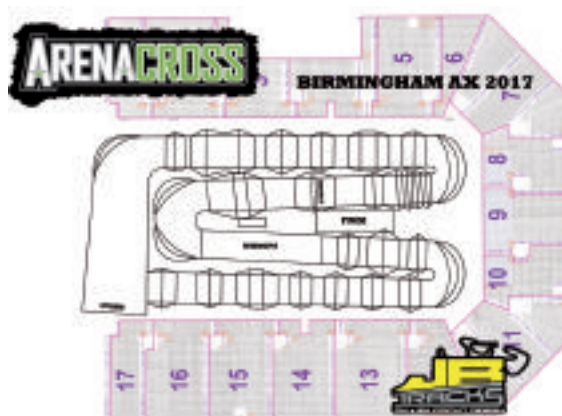
ROUND TWO - GLASGOW

A 214.7-mile drive north from Manchester will get you to the SSE Arena for round two. You've got seven days to do make the journey though so there's no need to rush...

Looking at the layout it looks almost lost in the huge setting of this arena but don't be fooled – this will be the biggest and probably fastest tracks of the year. A right-hand first turn can be problematic as riders can't always use the back brake so expect some banging here before the riders enter a whoop section that leads into a 180 left.

A rhythm section, left, step-on step-off follows before riders cross the start straight and hit what looks like a potential quad jump for the brave into another 180-degree left turn. After that is the Finish Line double which leads the riders back to turn one.

Another intelligent design with plenty of passing opportunity.



ROUND THREE - BIRMINGHAM

The Genting Arena has been a regular haunt of the Tour since year one and has a good sized floor space with 9,500 seats surrounding it so when AX sells out here you know there are a lot of people watching the action!

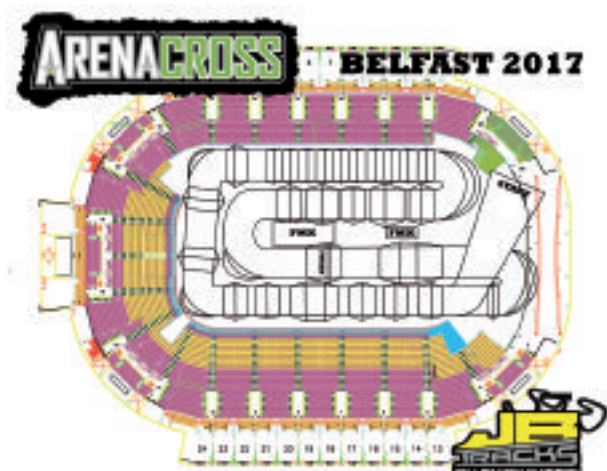
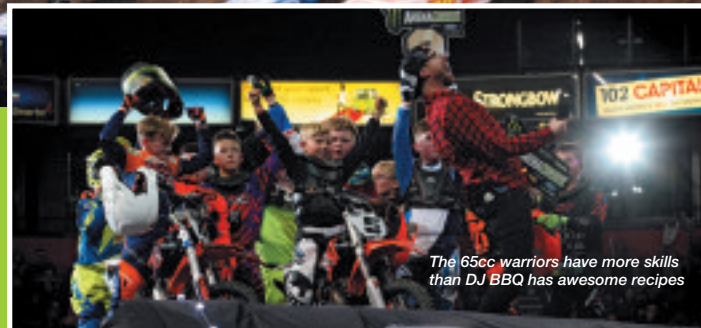
Another right-hand first turn sets riders up for a long rhythm section before going into a 180-degree right-hander. A dragon's back style obstacle follows before the fairly standard Finish Line double puts the riders into another 180 left although there's no banked berm all the way around this one.

The whoops are next and Birmingham's are always brutal. Get through them cleanly and there's the opportunity to triple into the next banked berm then it's double-double-triple down the next straight before the longest, flattest turn on the track brings the racers back to that opening rhythm section.

YOUTH ATTACK!

THE ARENACROSS MINI 'UNS...

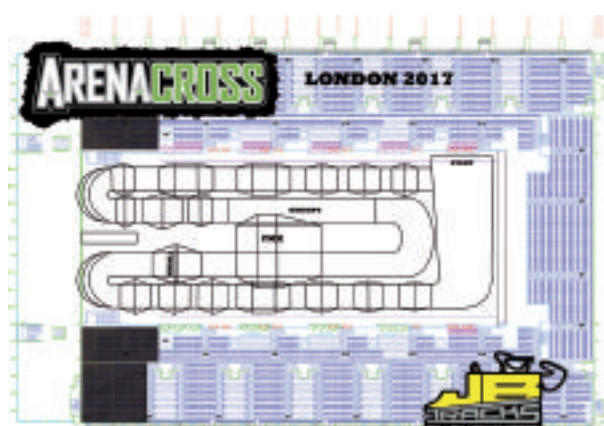
Even though they're tiny in size compared to the Pro Class competitors it doesn't mean that the stars of the Youth 65cc and Supermini classes are short on talent – or bravery. In fact the opposite is probably true as these huge doubles and triples must seem mountainous to the miniature heroes. Despite being dwarfed by the obstacles these races aren't short on thrills – or spills – so when the mini 'uns hit the track stick around and give 'em a cheer!



ROUNDS FOUR AND FIVE - BELFAST

The atmosphere inside the Odyssey Arena is always electric for Arenacross and it should be no different at the end of January. With two nights of racing it's super important for riders to gel with this track – fail to find your groove and there are basically double points to be lost over the course of two nights. Get it dialled and your quids in.

The low seating down one side of the arena and lack of length dictates track design here slightly but it's easily worked around and the end result is always on-point and very spectacular. We're told this initial design is likely to change somewhat but have been promised it'll provide two excellent nights of race action. Bring it on, c'mon!

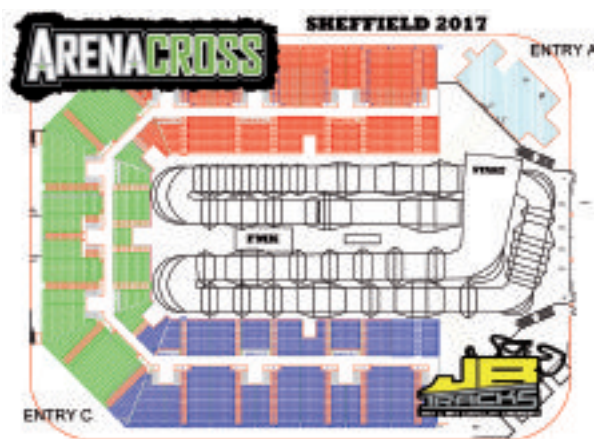


ROUND SEVEN - LONDON

Hmmm, I spy with my beady eye something a little bit different for the Wembley finale. We might be jumping the gun a little here but that FMX landing looks like it doubles up as the Finish Line landing which means dirt. And that means there's something in the pipeline for the fruitloop freestyle troop. Interesting...

Space is tight in London and that makes for a fairly narrow track but that hasn't effected passing in previous season finales as anyone who witnessed the 2016 clash will attest to. Another right-hand first corner leads into a rhythm section, a 180-right sets racers up for the Finish Line double then a long, flat left leads 'em into the whoops before a small triple and 180 right takes the riders into the gnarliest rhythm section of the year.

My imaginary dirt bike sees three ways through here – double-double-double, single-double-triple and the Billy Bignuts double-triple-single. That said, it might be possible to jump onto that first tabletop and jump across to the second before double doubling out. Who knows? It's just a drawing...



ROUND SIX - SHEFFIELD

Although Birmingham's NEC is the birthplace of indoor racing in the UK, Sheffield is the spiritual home as it's in this very stadium that arenacross-style action was brought back to life in Britain back in 1997. Things have progressed hugely since then and the track for the 2017 edition promises to be epic with a stack of huge jumps and devilish rhythm sections. The soil in Sheffield is always nice – albeit slippery underneath the wheels – so the racing here should be epic!

ROLL UP, ROLL UP!

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HIGH VOLTAGE!

We head to sunny San Francisco to test the electric bike that caused such a huge buzz at Red Bull Straight Rhythm when Josh Hill used it with great effect against the 250Fs in the Lites class. We also catch up with gnarly vet Ryan Hughes, future SX superstar Ryder DiFrancesco, take a look at what head protection specialists 6D have got hidden up their sleeves and see what dashing Dan Grove has been up to with his all new KTM 350 SX-F enduro bike. And there'll also be a stack of other stuff that we'll figure out in due course no doubt...



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